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Men Who Missed the Trail

BY
GEORGE CLARKE PECK

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NEW YORK CINCINNATI

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I

THE MAN WHO SPOILED A GOOD RECORD

EVERY modern newspaper has, as part of its regular equipment, a "Morgue." Never mind the gruesomeness of the name: the thing in itself is very interesting, and highly important to the proper conduct of a modern journal. Briefly, it consists of photographs, biographical sketches, and all sorts of personalia. Nearly every local celebrity, with many others, is represented. Let Mr. Jones or Mrs. Brown run for office, or even for a trolley car disastrously; or break one of the commandments, or start south with an unusual array of trunks, and out comes the photograph, plus sundry personal items in which the people are expected to be interested. Incidentally, this is how it happens that such caricatures of public personages occasionally adorn the pages of your favorite journal. The particular photograph was taken years ago, and in lieu of a later or

better likeness, was brought from the "Morgue" for current use.

But the "Morgue" contains notables only. You could not expect a newspaper to be interested in all the clerks and mechanics of a community. Most of us may go down town and come back, days without number; may earn a modest living, and mind our own business, and keep the commandments with reasonable care. And unless we—ah, that is just it. We must be or do something unusual. We must climb high or fall low. We must be so handsome or so homely that we attract attention. We must be a good deal better or a good deal worse than our neighbors on the block. We must run *for* something, or *away* from it. We must break out of the class of the average man, or we shall find no place in the "Morgue."

But pardon. I was only preparing the way to observe that if there had been a newspaper in Elisha's town, the man we are to study would have been missing from its "Morgue"—at least until after the tragedy. Elisha's photograph would have been included, with certain more or less authentic

reports of his activities. But not Gehazi. Newspapers are seldom interested in Gehazi —until he happens to strike a fortune or to misbehave outrageously. Imagine the ordinary employee of a great daily—a doorman or compositor or elevator boy—getting his picture into the "Morgue." That is not the way the world works.

Yet—and we need to make that small word emphatic—yet, you cannot tell the story of Elisha and omit Gehazi. You never can. Gehazi, in his way, is as important as Elisha. In spite of newspaper discriminations and all other kinds of mistaken emphasis, Elisha *without* Gehazi is not quite Elisha. One morning Gehazi failed to put in an appearance at the usual hour. Of course his master knew it would be so. Elisha knew the tragic reason. And, still, it was a different day for Elisha—the day of the morning on which Gehazi failed to appear.

Suppose that when you reach the office to-morrow your stenographer should not be there. One stenographer more or less, and a world well stocked with them—what dif-

ference? But it is *your* stenographer that is absent to-morrow morning, and you must write your letters instead of dictating them. To be sure, you can fill the place easily—perhaps; but meantime you experience an uncomfortable jolt. You had forgotten how comparatively helpless a shrewd business man can be when his helpers are missing. Or the cook failed to arrive in time to prepare your breakfast, or the milkman was late, or the postman was stricken on his route, or the morning paper blew down the street, or anything else you happen to think of. Merely a small cog in the big and complex machine of a day. Offhand you might tell yourself how independent you are. But it is disconcerting how the failure of the smallest cog upsets the machine. Sometimes I fancy that most of the trouble in the world results from the failure of the smallest cogs to function properly.

And that brings us straight back to Gehazi—the man who spoiled a good record. For the moment never mind how Elisha regarded Gehazi's station. The important thing to inquire is how Gehazi regarded it.

For Elisha to think meanly of the other's task were a pity. But for Gehazi so to think would be a calamity. Some one tells of a famous orchestral leader who one day paused in the midst of practice, shook his baton impatiently, and cried, "Flageolet, flageolet!" Neither the deep rumble of the viols nor the sharp cry of the horns deceived his keen ear. No other instrument could fill the place of the humblest of all. He missed the flageolet. And his interruption of practice was a call to the flageolet player to magnify his own work. We are so constantly tempted to think that our part in the orchestra is unimportant. If we could play the spectacular trombone, or draw bow across the strings of the leading violin, that were different. But as things are, nobody else will know whether we play or not. Our score is so small.

I wonder who knows very much about this matter of bigness or smallness? The worst logic in the world is the "irrelevant logic of size." And we did not learn it in the school of Jesus Christ. Magnitude proves nothing! India has the tallest mountain in the

world, but I cannot discover that she has profited thereby. We have the longest river in the world, but even that did not save us from the "Ku Klux Klan" or making a muddle in Mexico. Evidently, there is a good deal to be said in favor of forty-two centimeter guns; but I do not think the war will be won by them. Napoleon marched into Russia one of the most invincible armies ever mustered, to meet defeat, not at the hands of Cossacks but by snowflakes just such as you blow from your sleeve on a winter day. Stanley said that the worst enemy that his men had to face in Africa were "jiggers"—a species of tiny worm. So I can easily believe that this vast continent-wide war may be decided not by guns, but by the size of a grain harvest or germs too small to see with the naked eye.

Years ago, as my friend was dying in California, he sat propped up in bed and poured out his soul to me. He was so plucky that even his trembling pencil was pointed with fire and burned the paper. He so wanted to live. Then he wrote: "O, Peck, dear fellow, I'm not afraid to die, but I can't

bear to be eaten up by these miserable little bugs." Yet we live every day by the help of allies just as infinitesimal. Physical health is spelled out in body-cells so small you cannot see them except with the aid of a microscope. And the most stalwart man that lives is absolutely dependent upon the perfect marshaling and coordination of myriads of tiny organisms.

Evidently, God has a scale of values very different from ours. One day Jesus, pointing, it may be, to a dead sparrow in the path, quoted the market price of sparrows, and said, "Not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father." At another time he waved his hand toward some common field-flowers, and cried, "If God so clothe the grass." He was not making sentences, as the rhetoricians do, to show how brilliant they are. He was reciting the plain prose of every day. He was telling his brothers and sisters what kind of a God we work for —what sort of a Father ours is.

And if Gehazi ever learns this lesson, not all the snobs on earth can make him ashamed of his calling. One of my cloth once ven-

tured to commiserate a cobbler upon the lowliness of his task. But the cobbler, with the pride of an archangel in his eyes, flung back the preacher's pity into his face: "If I peg shoes as conscientiously as you prepare sermons, I'll be just as acceptable to God." What of preachers, anyhow, except for plain shoemakers, plain artisans, and all sorts of humble folks to practice the preaching? And who really knows just which is the most important business in the world? The general depends upon his staff, and they upon the men in the ranks, and they upon the commissary department, and all upon the munition makers and transport service, and ultimately upon the farmers in a thousand fields. Nothing that needs to be done is unimportant. No real service can ever be mean. The humblest task that God lays at any man's hand is worthy of being invested with celestial dignity. Till he summons to something else, put self respect into the duty nearest.

But back to Gehazi. We catch our first glimpse of him on an errand for his master. "Go, call this Shunammite," said Elisha.

And for some reason Gehazi obeyed. I wonder if he was proud to go? At least he went. One of the finest fragments that ever fell from the gifted pen of Elbert Hubbard was his Message to Garcia. Taking hint from a trifling episode, he glorified the man who can be trusted to do the duty assigned him. I do not recall the messenger's name. I am not sure that Hubbard knew it. But that is not the question. Our name is never so important as the errand we are charged with. Let God keep the record of names. Meantime, with all dispatch, heat or cold, at any cost, the Message to Garcia. From most of us God asks no finer achievement than whole-hearted delivery of the message. We are not masters—not many of us: we are under orders. And the way we discharge our commission tells the kind of people we are.

A certain ordinary patrolman had just displayed genuine skill in handling an emergency case. Before the ambulance arrived he had administered most timely "first aid." And the ambulance surgeon looked him over and suggested, "You ought to have

been a surgeon." For an instant the officer's eye clouded. Perhaps he was dreaming one of those dreams that unfit the soul. Then he replied, "What's the matter with my being a policeman?" What, indeed? What's the matter with putting into our day's work all the genius we have? Frankly, I do not set great store by our usual outcries against our present task and our demand for a higher. Perhaps there are motormen who ought to have been lawyers and diplomats. But I can think of lawyers and diplomats who would have been more useful as motormen. Every one wants to get up in the world. And most of the world's urgent work must be done near the ground. Obedience is a finer quality than independence. Some people are so taken up with their independence they have no time to do their duty. Gehazi was a "great" servant—for a time. He knew how to do as he was told. He could carry a message uncolored and undiminished. Perhaps he could do that better than Elisha could. You did not need to ask him if the errand was performed. That is the sort of man he was.

Then the scene changes and again we have sight of Gehazi—still the reliable man. Into a certain home at Shunem the shadows had fallen. If it had been a modern home there would have been a flutter of piteous white at the door. Some of you know what that means. The white has hung at your door, and, within, were broken hearts and a little still form. And you sent for the preacher. So did the Shunammite woman. Some folks never send at any other time. We preachers get used, I suppose, to being looked upon as a sort of post-mortem necessity. But scores of times—shall I not say hundreds—with my hand upon the doorbell near the telltale emblem, I have wished I might have been found use for while the sun was still high and the songs unhushed.

I wonder if God feels the same way? Among the tragic pities of life is the pity that so many people seem to get on without God until the shadows fall deep and black. Somebody tells of a child who objected to saying his prayers in the morning. No protest at night—only in the morning. And the reason he gave was as definite as our

own: "I can take care of myself in the daytime," he said. So many of us feel; or, at least, we act upon that basis. We can look after our affairs while the sun shines. Only when night falls, and we are afraid of the dark, do we grope for the Father's hand. John said of the Celestial City that there shall be "no night there." But one would scarcely dare to pray for nightless days here and now: so many of the Father's children would miss him altogether.

So the Shunammite woman sought the prophet of old. I must not attempt to recount the story. All that concerns us just now is Gehazi's part in the transaction. See him hurrying to lay the prophet's staff upon the face of the dead boy. I wonder why Elisha gave such a commission. Probably he merely wished to make sure that the child was really dead—as when the nurse holds a mirror at the lips of a pulseless patient. And Gehazi carried out instructions scrupulously. He laid the staff upon the face of the child —so, and so, and so. And nothing happened. Did he expect that something would?

Most of us have a sort of superstitious

regard for the prophet's staff. In the famous church of Saint Anne at Beaupre is a relic of the saint. It is a tiny bit of bone from the hand of the mother of Mary. They keep it in a small, circular glass box, and bring it out on great occasions. I have seen the priest pass it over a string of beads or the head of a suppliant, as if there were intrinsic merit in a fragment of bone! Attached to the other bones of Saint Anne's living hand, that fragment no doubt was very useful. But when the good woman was done with it, it was merely a bone. As well expect a rabbit's foot, got in a cemetery at midnight, to bring good luck!

No, Gehazi, the staff is valueless—except as a staff—apart from Elisha's hand. The staff method, as some one calls it, is always a failure. Let the Christian Scientist talk about "absent treatment" and its cures. But for the rest of us all real healings await the touch of the hand. God does not expect us to bless the world at arm's length. Elisha must come. Elisha must come before the light kindles again in dull eyes. Here, then, is the trouble with part of our ministry.

Here is the hopeless sterility of many charitable dollars. We forget that "the gift without the giver is bare." No substitute has yet been found for the warmth of a human hand. It is said that the highest polish on a piano cannot be secured except by the rubbing of the human palm. Be sure, then, that the rare brightness of souls is not brought out at less cost. Next time an occasion offers for you to bless another, don't send if you can avoid it. *Go.*

Again the scene changes and we open the door upon Naaman's cure. And there is Gehazi. He it was, perhaps, who carried the strange prescription to Naaman. But the wonder has come and Naaman is clean. And with a spirit worth remembering Elisha declined to accept a reward either for himself or for Gehazi. Some things cannot be paid for save in the coin of the heart. Not once in the twenty-four years of my ministry have I felt that I could receive a fee for service in the house of mourning. But Gehazi felt differently about such matters. Hence he overtook Naaman, and by the use of a fraudulent story secured the bonus

which his master had declined on his behalf. Alas, Gehazi was not the man to miss the "main chance," as we call it. Naaman could *afford* to pay. Doubtless he *ought* to *pay*—and Gehazi would be the gainer. So he took the gift.

How much better do we? Sometimes you will hear people blessing themselves for keeping their hands from pantry shelves they *cannot reach.* There is a deal of such virtue in the world. But untried virtue is no virtue at all. To see the "main chance" and set one's face against it; to refuse to claim the advantage life flings in your way; to hold back a passionate hand from the fruit within grasp—not as gratuitous martyrdom, but for the sake of one's soul—this marks a man. Gehazi could not do that. In the crucial test he failed.

And the scene changes again. With his home door shut securely upon his new wealth, Gehazi is back with his master. But somehow Gehazi is an altered man. One need not be a prophet to discern the difference. And when Elisha questioned, Gehazi lied. I do not know which was worse—the

original fault or the falsehood which sought to cover it. But what is the uncanny white on Gehazi's cheek, mounting upward to his brow? Fear, or shame, or remorse—or leprosy? Suffice that he is marked for life. He who sells manhood for cash, or pleasure, or fame, is always marked for life.

II

THE MAN WHO DODGED PROMOTION

SAUL is a tantalizing study in contrasts. But I do not expect you to reprobate him for *that* reason. Where is the man who misses being a similar study? It is in geography only that Kipling's familiar lines hold good:

> O, East is East, and West is West,
> And never the twain shall meet.

In human life they are constantly meeting. In each of us East elbows West and South crowds up against North. Savage and Christian, outlaw and good citizen, jungle and salon, jostle one another every day, and in every man that lives. You can no more describe a man in simple terms than you can "state" the climate of the so-called temperate zone, where we must occasionally consult the calendar in order to be sure how to

classify a particular day—whether as summer or winter, spring or fall.

So, I repeat, I do not expect you to reprobate Saul at the very beginning of our study, chiefly because he is a man of contrasts. To say that the two leading portraits of him, furnished us in this album, do not agree is to say a superficial thing. No two portraits ever *do* agree, and for a profound reason—that no human being can be caught in the same mood two successive moments. In the famous gallery at Paris hang two portraits of Rembrandt—both done by his own hand. One shows him as a young man of twenty, perhaps, the wonderful eye aflame with the light of certain triumph and popular fame. The second canvas reveals a man prematurely old, the face bloated with sensuality, haggard, disillusioned, tragically sad, the eye muddied with sin. Between the two portraits, and explaining their contrast, lies the corrupt middle life of the master—its open shame and public scandal. It is said that when Leonardo da Vinci, toward completion of his wonderful "The Last Supper," came to need a model for Judas,

he, by fearful irony, selected the subject who had posed for the figure of Jesus years before. Ponder it: the same man, within span of a few years of dissipation, furnishing competent clue to the looks of both Jesus and Judas!

But I instance the case not so much for the sake of proving how a life may run down hill as to remind you that upland and lowland, saint and scalawag, Jesus and Judas, are potentially present in the same man at the same time. Some day you submit yourself to the ordeal of being photographed. And the camera-artist, anxious for a satisfactory result, poses you several times and in due course sends home a half dozen proofs. And you?—well, you are naturally flattered or displeased, as the case may be. Probably you pass the proofs around, asking your intimates to help you select the "best likeness," and are somewhat chagrined if they chance to hit upon the least comely presentment. But the most arresting item in the whole proceeding is that you should look like a half dozen different folks. No two prints ever agree in the revelations of the subject

before the camera: and for the profoundest of reasons. While the artist was changing plates, or readjusting the focus, or shifting the poise of your chin, you silently altered your mood. Who will deny that the same man may be a half dozen kinds of men in as many minutes? And the camera merely catches the mood which the subject of it hardly recognized.

So with divergent estimates of a man. It has been said that the story of Saul, as we have it recorded in the Bible, was penned by different hands—one admiring, the other scornful. Perhaps. Such things occur very often. Froude called Henry VIII a "patriot king." Macaulay gave him a very much less complimentary name. The New York Sun described Lincoln as a buffoon, whereas the New York Tribune sketched him of heroic size. Or, if you will have more modern instance, take the present incumbent of the White House and let this be open meeting. No two of you will probably agree as to his character or the value of his services. How can you? I do not believe that any President can fully agree with himself for

an hour. The more sincere a man is the more trouble he will experience in naming his own grade. We are composites, all of us. We are strange creatures of contrast. Winter and summer, frost and sun, strive within us forever. Never mind that Saul's biographers failed to agree about him. He could not have agreed with respect to himself.

Let us look at him kindly. He was a big man who could be guilty of the smallest things. You will frequently hear it said of a child who has prematurely gone forward toward physical maturity that "it is unfortunate to be so big. People expect too much of such a child." And, for some reason or other, we seem to "expect more" from two hundred than from a hundred and twenty pounds; from six feet than from five. Marshall P. Wilder's poor, twisted body might have been admirably adapted to his drollery on the platform. But you never would consider, offhand, selecting such a misshapen mortal to plead a great cause or welcome royalty. Knowing perfectly well that the size of a man's body is no more index

of the size of his soul than the weight of a pearl is of its value, we continue to pay absurd homage to size. Even to Samuel's rather critical eyes Saul *looked* the king—just as George Washington looked the heroic role he played. You would have expected great things of him—as you *never* would from Cæsar or Napoleon, both of them undersized. Saul was a marked man anywhere. His powerful shoulders and towering head singled him out. I can imagine how altogether proud his father was of him. And when Samuel picked him for the arduous honor of kingship it was not more than his father and mother had always dreamed.

But to live up to one's reputation is quite another matter. In the issue Saul might easily have wished that he had been six or eight inches shorter, and that he had remained hidden when they were looking for him "among the stuff." To disappoint the world's expectation, to frustrate the dreams your friends have dreamed concerning you, to receive in advance pay for the noblest service and then not to deliver the goods—

in other words, not to play one's part—is always solemn business. Has it ever occurred to you that you *owe* the world to be as good as it thinks you are? Grant that you never *asked* the honor, and that you distinctly remind men you are no better than they, does that let you off? One recalls the plaintive cry which a pair of broken-hearted disciples dropped into the ear of our Lord on the walk to Emmaus. "We trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." Suppose it had *not* been he? Suppose that Jesus had been unable or unwilling to fulfill such wistful dreams? Suppose that, after gathering to himself "the hopes and fears of all the years," and such passionate attachment as no other son of woman ever won, he had disappointed the ages?

O, I know what you will say—indeed, I have said it many times—that nobody else has right to set the gauge for your life or mine. I wonder. I wonder if what the world expects of us may not be the precise thing God is asking. I wonder if my mother could possibly fix the standard higher than God would fix it. Yes, yes, of course people are

sometimes very unreasonable, far less reasonable than God is. But forget that for a moment. All I am saying is that oftentimes the world's hopes lay solemn obligation upon us. And then to disappoint those hopes, as Saul did; to play a part less kingly than the part you look fitted for. Poor Saul—how misplaced his big shoulders looked when he tried to hide "behind the stuff," on his coronation day! Like a bashful schoolboy twisting the corners of his coat, like modern Englishmen begging off from military service in the hour of their country's need. For a big man Saul could be so pathetically small.

Next, he was a brave man whose prowess made him presumptuous. Success turned his head as it has done for so many of his posterity. The most intoxicating wine in the world is the wine of success. It goes straight to the brain. Overlooking the Hudson river in New York city is one of the palaces reared by modern money-kings. I remember the pride of the neighbors, how they always pointed it out to guests. But they might as well be proud of proximity to a

cemetery. It is not even an honorable mausoleum—that mammoth pile. It is an open sepulcher within which lies the blasted reputation of its builder. For "when he was strong"—and he had come through many vicissitudes from poverty to wealth, from mechanic's apprentice to magnate—"when he was *strong,* his heart was lifted up to his destruction."

You can see the same thing happening anywhere. More souls, proportionately, have been hurt by success than by defeat. Now and again a defeated man commits suicide with poison or bullet. But the successful man may do even worse than that; he may murder his own soul.

> O, it is excellent
> To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous
> To *use* it like a giant.

I notice that a certain German prophet announced that within six months his countrymen would "dance on the grave of England." Indeed, that is the sort of fear some of us have with respect to the ultimate victor in this colossal conflict: that success may so

madden it as to make it want to dance upon the grave of its defeated foe—as the Duke of Guise ground his heel into the face of the dead Coligny.

Honestly, who are the worst foes of American sanctities? Not the frank anarchists, not the embittered poor, but the defiant prosperous who scarcely hesitate to flaunt any law which bars their way: the men who wreck railroads and crush their fellow men, who bribe judges and smile patronizingly at God. More havoc, for example, has been done to the marriage altar by the divorces and double establishments of the rich than by the franker immoralities of the poor. More harm has been done to the Sabbath by well-groomed desecrators than by ragamuffins howling in vacant lots and by roistering foreigners. Sacrilege and lawlessness—these are peculiarly the sins which break out of success. You may see them both in Saul, sacrilege when he ventured to perform the priest's function in the absence of Samuel, lawlessness when he spared Agag in express defiance of divine command.

Weak, he would have dared neither;

strong, he became guilty of both. Sacrilege and lawlessness—these are the sins of the strong. And it is the strong who need pray oftenest one part of David's familiar petition: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

Again Saul was a man of generous impulses, but poisoned by suspiciousness. You would have liked him—until you discovered that he never thoroughly trusted you. He enjoyed the sensation of magnanimity, but he never quite let himself go. The record says that he loved David at first sight, yet soon turned bitter. He was fond of Samuel, but was easily persuaded that the prophet was plotting to undo him. What a host of good hearts are shrunken by suspicion! This is certainly a sad world for the man who is on the lookout for evil. Othello did not want to believe ill of his beautiful wife, but once the seed had dropped in his soul, the fruit was certain. Iago knew he needed only to insinuate. "Now let the poison work," he said. Othello's suspicious nature would complete the task.

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul—
Let me not name it to you, yon chaste stars.
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;
Nor mar that whiter skin of hers than alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.

. . . . . .

O, balmy breath that doth almost persuade
Justice to break her sword.

Well enough for Cæsar to insist that "Cæsar's wife must be above suspicion," but neither Cæsar's wife nor Cæsar's friend nor Cæsar's butler can keep "above suspicion" when Cæsar's mind is poisoned. Not even Jesus escaped. What his critics failed to *see,* they still gave him credit for. O, the pity of reading into the souls of people malignances that may never have been there! And O the shame of discovering, too late for remedy, that the fault we imputed had no existence except in our own brain. Better that a dozen guilty folks escape their just deserts than that a single innocent should be branded by our suspicion. Jealousy makes us see black as well as green.

But again: Saul is a striking instance of fine tastes and violent outbursts, in juxtaposition. He loved music passionately.

Offhand, you might say that a man who loved harmony of sound or color so dearly could hardly be guilty of discord in his own life. At least that is what we frequently affirm to-day. We talk as if lovers of painting and flowers and music were already possessors of the Kingdom. If it were only true! Alas, that some of the most dreadful passions the world records have broken out of souls that loved the beautiful. I doubt if all poetry of motion, all musical raptures, together with all sculpture and painting, ever redeemed one life from destruction. Æsthetics are one thing, ethics are another. To Oscar Wilde beauty was everything; disharmony hurt him like a slap in the face. If æsthetics could save anybody, Oscar Wilde offered a good opportunity. But the man to whom beauty was god sank so low that an English prison swallowed him for a season. Did you read his De Profundis? —the ghastly confession of the apostle of beauty? Thank God for all refinement, but remember that the finer the nature the more terrible disharmony you may evoke if the instrument be out of tune. See Saul rousing

from the sensuous spell of David's music to hurl a javelin at the musician's head.

I should like to speak at length upon one further paradox in Saul. He was naturally religious. He became so enthusiastic at one time that his friends sneered about his "turning preacher." Yet read again the tense story of his visit to the witch of Endor, and see this favored man hanging breathless over the magic brew, crying for Samuel. What do you worship, the altar or its Lord? Is it the Sabbath concerns you or the Lord of the Sabbath? Have you more confidence in God than in palmists, and thirteen at table, and Friday terrors? If you really wanted to know the way, would you pray, or would you consult a clairvoyant? Like any other beautiful power this highest power of all may be perverted, and the man of religion may become easily the man of superstition.

But Saul. He died as he had lived—a man of contrasts. With a flaring up of the old imperial spirit which made his soldiers love him, he declined to live beyond the defeat of his army. He ordered his armor-

bearer to make an end of a defeated king. And when the armor-bearer shrank back from such treason Saul pitched forward hungrily upon his own sword. O, Saul, if thou hadst lived up to thy beginnings!

III

THE MAN WHO MEANT NO HARM

On the floor of a certain famous chamber, in Holyrood Castle, is a sinister-looking stain. Frankly, one may need to use his imagination as well as his eyes in order to recognize it. Whatever it may have been once, to-day it is not much of a stain. Nevertheless, it serves to recall one of the many love affairs of Scotland's best-loved queen; and, in particular, it reminds you of the lover, her secretary, whose blood is said to have reddened the floor of his lady's room. At the scene of his sacrilege he made forfeit of his life. By the desecration of an altar he got himself remembered who otherwise might, long ago, have been forgotten—an immortality of remembrance if not of praise.

Somewhat similarly Uzzah made certain of being remembered. By the loss of his

own life at the side of the ark, toward which he stretched out an eager, if unwise, hand, he saved himself from oblivion. Apart from the tragedy we should not know his name. He might have lived a good life and done many a graceful act and, so far as historic mention goes, succeeded in being as completely forgotten as the flowers that once bloomed in Nero's garden. But, by a single deed and the price he paid, he wrote his name among the immortals. In proof of which immortality of remembrance we are studying him now—the man who meant no harm.

That poor, crumpled heap of a man by the side of the ark he tried to steady—I scarcely need ask if you approve of the fate which won him his age-long remembrance. Normally, you approve very tamely. Find the story in any book except the Bible, and you would disapprove most heartily. Indeed, God has to constantly put up with our disapproval. We do not approve of the present war, nor of the premature loss of a mother, nor of grippe germs, and what not. A list of our disapprovals would cover a

good deal of stationery. And so far as God is responsible for the tragedies against which our hearts cry out, we withhold approval of God himself. O, if we dared to *phrase* the faults we *find* with the divine administration! As a matter of fact, many of the criticisms we pass against this and that are but thinly veiled tilts at God himself. And God holds his way undismayed, unswerved, unrevengeful, but, as I sometimes fancy, with a great pain at his heart because his children lay up so many things against him. He "lets the lifted thunder drop" and, in a sense very different from that the poet intended in our familiar hymn, on smiling fields and tall cedars.

Word came to me recently of the tragic death of a whilom parishioner. He was on the roof of his new building, and he misstepped, and God failed to abrogate the law of gravitation—and the aged father is breaking his heart. Colonel Waring took a chance when he went to Cuba to clean out its pests of disease. I am sure that God honored the spirit of the man, yet the man's life paid forfeit for exposure to the deadly germs.

Humanly speaking, that "beautiful boy Keats," as one described him, ought not to have died so young. But God has certain laws which may not be trifled with, even by so rare a soul as John Keats. And here are men working at high pressure against the dictates of sanity and the warnings of physicians, playing with fire in hope of snatching, unscathed, a few extra luxuries for their loved ones. Some day the flame catches them. We call it apoplexy, or Bright's disease, or what we may: 'tis the fire men play with. And shall we then use hard names upon the heavenly Father for letting the fire do its work?

Every law of the good God is a "holy" law. Laws of health, laws of physics, laws of conservation—as truly as laws of chastity and honor and truth—are holy laws. We break none of them with impunity. Upon every one of them is fixed a price for transgression. And for every piece of sacrilege —whether against the ark of health, or the ark of friendship or justice or domestic honor—there is a penalty which somebody pays, soon or late. Else God were less than

God. So this man who meant no harm dropped by the side of the outraged shrine. Not even his sincerity of intention saved him. His affair was not to speculate as to what might happen to the ark when the oxen stumbled, his duty was to keep his hands off the ark.

But of that later. Meantime, I wonder if, tumbling beside the ark, Uzzah lived long enough to wish he had never been promoted. Time was when you and I could not grow up fast enough. We were avid of the privileges of maturity. We saw grown men doing the things we lusted to do—driving their own teams, smoking big cigars, taking holidays when they pleased, and staying up all night if thus it suited them. We saw women with the luxury of seats at the opera, and their own establishments, and children in their arms. And then we also grew up. We came into possession of some of the joys for which once we sighed. Our dreams came true. And how often have we looked into the faces of our privileges, wondering if they were worth what they cost!

Every square foot you add to your door-

yard means more weeds, possibly, as well as flowers. Every addition to the domain of our country has brought us fresh problems and perils. And every blessing which the good God can drop into a soul carries seeds of bitter harvesting. Even the sanctities, for intrustment with which we ought to fall on our knees every day, thanking God, furnish new opportunities for sacrilege. Suppose that God enriched you with the gift of a glorious voice, like Jenny Lind's; would you treat it as a sanctity as she did, and "sing to God"—even more than to the audience? Or would you put a price upon it and sell it? Let God grant you a friend as Jonathan to David, as Hallam to Tennyson. What then? Friendship is a shrine before which the irreverent soul may play the wanton more tragically than a recluse could possibly play it.

Let God give you a home, with the love of husband or wife and the clinging arms of children. But when God gives *that* he sets an ark of the covenant within the walls of the place you call "home." 'Tis the *ark* makes the *home*. And the sacrileges per-

petuated against the ark of the home are less excusable than all the ribaldries of Bohemianism. Or, let Jesus Christ cross our path, as he crossed Peter's and Matthew's and Nathanael's. Much has been made of the beauty he brought to his friends. But what about Judas and Pilate and the soldiers who platted the crown of thorns? Jesus came to them also. The sanctity was at their gate. But for the ark within reach they might have been spared the greater infamy connected with their names. To be called out of any sort of obscurity by any voice of God, to be set to walking beside an ark, as Uzzah was, and to realize the possible sacrilege of an unguarded moment is enough to hush our step as in a temple.

But Uzzah. He was evidently an ordinary human being, with normal religious impulses. I do not know that he would have sought his post of honor behind the ark. Possibly he would have preferred plowing or fishing. But, be that as it may, he had toward the ark of the covenant the usual sentiments of a normal man. He was *reli-*

gious. And when the oxen stumbled he flung out a quick hand to save the ark. You will often hear men classify themselves as religious or irreligious. There are no "irreligious" men, save as freaks of nature—like a man with one kidney, or the heart on the wrong side. Men everywhere are religious. As Sabatier puts it, "Man is incurably religious." Some of the most religious people I ever knew shunned prayer meetings and never opened the Bible and rendered scant homage to Jesus Christ. Yet were they religious. God creates no other kind of folks. Catch them unaware, strike them deep enough, and you evoke the religious response.

As I was leaving a certain home recently the man of the house said this, half in derision, perhaps: "No, I don't come to church often, but I suppose that Billy Sunday will get me." Such is the warm hope many are cherishing in their hearts, concerning husbands and friends, that Billy Sunday will "get" them. This is the real animus of the long-planned campaign: we hope that in spite of his absurdities and contortions Billy

Sunday will "get" the men and women our churches are failing to reach. And if he does? It will *not* be by making men and women religious. They will be that before he comes and they will be that after he goes, whether or not he "gets" them, as we say. They cannot help being that.

Not even Jesus came to make people religious. They were religious already, after an ingrowing, painful fashion. He came to evoke melody, not to put it in. Have you had an accomplished musician sit down at your piano—the same piano on which you laboriously pick out hymns, and the children practice? Not a very large portion of the scale of the average piano is ever used: just an octave or two near "middle C." The rest of the keyboard might as well be in Iceland. Then the musician sits down at your piano. For a moment his fingers wander coaxingly over the keys, as if he were calling to some spirit within the case. Then he plays, and deep thunders roll up from the lower octaves, and brooks seem to laugh from the upper register. Shouts and songs, prayers and love calls, storms and zephyrs—

all from the instrument which had so often stood ornamental and voiceless in your parlor. You had scarcely dreamed it held so much potential wonder. Yet, as a matter of fact, the musician at the keyboard had not added a single string to the piano's equipment. He had not lengthened the keyboard an inch. He had merely *brought out* what was *in*.

And that is the genius of Jesus Christ and all his coadjutors. They *bring out* what was *in* man from the beginning. We do not make men and women religious. At our best we simply play upon hitherto unused portions of the keyboard. We call forth the harmonies which have lain slumbering in the strings. We let men discover how much it means to be sons of God. Surely we cannot expect Billy Sunday to do a diviner thing than that. All he can hope to do is to play upon the instrument God made.

But Uzzah—the man who meant no harm. I am sure that my topic well describes him. Even when he reached out an impious hand to steady the tottering ark he intended well. His tragic fate by the side of the ark argues

nothing against the purity of his motive. He died because, while intending well, he was guilty of grievous harm. Sometimes I think that the Recording Angel must keep two sets of books: one for our motives, the other for our deeds. What we actually *accomplish* is so different from what we intend. Seriously, I believe that most of us mean well most of the days. Even in our worst moods we still require a clean bill of health for our *motives.*

In one of the hospitals of our city lies a woman battling with death which she herself invited to her door. Easy enough to reprobate her wild act. Statute law in most of the States declares it is a crime for a human being to attempt to shorten his own journey. But that is not to say the suicide means wrong. On the contrary, he means right, as he sees it. And the woman who swallowed the dose which she supposed would end all was choosing, as between two evils, that which seemed to her the lesser.

So it is commonly with us. We do not intend to do wrong. We first reassure ourselves that the wrong we want to do is right.

We mean no real harm. The thief probably finds it easy to believe he needs what he takes more than the owner needs it. David did not mean any harm to Bathsheba. Perhaps he went so far as to convince himself that it would be better for *her* to have Uriah out of the way. O, the endless sophistications of the soul! Lay open the heart-cloister of the gayest destroyer and you will find him salving conscience with the plea that he does not mean any harm. And the revenges we practice, what of them? Why, we do not call them revenges at all. We are merely defending ourselves; collecting our just dues, giving truth a chance to prevail. Any harm we may do is purely incidental to a righteous campaign.

"What fools these mortals be!" I suppose the Kaiser had the purest motives imaginable: and so had all the others who helped bring on the war. Yet a continent is reeking with blood. Do you think the final Judgment for this colossal crime will be according to motive?

> Evil is wrought by want of thought
> As well as want of feeling.

Uzzah died by the ark, though his heart and hand were honest.

But the sin for which Uzzah's life paid the penalty was the sin of sacrilege. I know there is a spirit which insists that a human life is worth more than any ark ever fashioned. Measuring, even by commercial tables, we figure that a man is worth, say, three thousand dollars to the State. And measuring as God must measure who spared not his own Son, what price shall we set upon a life? Yet, according to this tragic record, the *man* died for a *thing*.

Ah, but to say that is to miss the meaning of the story. The ark of the covenant was not merely a thing: it was a symbol. It stood for the holiest hopes and most daring dreams of Uzzah's race. It represented God. It was sign of things eternal. And as such it might be worth more than a human life or a thousand of them. Uzzah's life was worthily forfeited by the side of the ark, if thus he helped save to his race the values for which the ark stood. But of that at another time; just now, this:

At any cost we must preserve the fine

sanctities of life. Whatever tends to cheapen life is sacrilege—the most heinous of sins. There comes back to me the admonition of a father to his son's classmates as they bore the casket of their fellow up the aisle: "Go softly, boys," he said; "remember that you are carrying the temple of the Holy Ghost." The body as temple—do you think of it so? Do you treat it so? Utility, animal, laboratory, or temple, which is it? Most of our thoughtless sins would expire in our hearts if we thought of our bodies as temples. We should hold back avid hands if we remembered.

And the lives of our neighbors—O, the sacrilegious hands we fling out, whether in passion or solicitude! So terribly prompt are we with criticism or scorn; so painfully familiar. Remember that the other man's life is an ark, upon which no sudden hand must be laid. Respect his sanctity as you would demand respect for your own. Not even in a burst of solicitude do you touch his life profanely.

And God. God has many arks of the covenant: the church, the Sabbath, the home,

friendship, childhood, the hearts of men. By our treatment of *them* we learn how to treat *him*. Because of what they mean we must hold them sacred. Even when the oxen stumble, let God take care of his own ark. His stake is greater than ours. By all means, and at any cost, let us hold back our hands from the touch that profanes.

IV

THE MAN WHO LOST HIS DREAM

Not long ago there came to light an old diary kept in careful, Spencerian hand. It was a boy's diary of a transatlantic voyage —my own diary of my first trip across the sea. You can guess just the sort of entries I found—notes of storms long since forgotten, impressions no longer impressive, names of people I had not thought of for thirty years. But as I gave myself up, for the moment, to the spell of the old record, I would have paid a good price for the power to read between the lines those meanings which make the life of *any* book. You have had similar experience with an old letter. Yellow with age and cracked at the folds, remembrancer of bygone passions and pains —how you puzzled and frowned or dreamed and went tender over it! At sight of the thing "memories that bless and burn" leaped into life again. But here a line held you

curious. The words were plain enough; their significance had faded more dismally than the ink. And you tore up the page or put it away again with a sigh, wishing a competent interpreter were at your elbow.

Thus one feels toward the fragment I bring you from Paul's correspondence: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Less than a dozen words, yet what a long story they could tell had we the key to them! Paul did not keep a diary as some of us have done—chiefly for the sake of "keeping it." More than once I have watched a chronic diary-keeper, pencil in mouth, scratching his head, trying to think of something to say for the day just closing. Be sure that Paul never made entries like this, for the sake of filling up a page. He might have used his own blood for ink—so vital to him was the record. And if we could know the truth, I am sure we should find Paul's heart hurting him cruelly, while he jotted down this item about the man who lost his dream. In a very reverent spirit, then, for the sake of the rest of us, I venture to read between the lines of this old letter.

Demas: you notice that I have described him as "the man who lost his dream." I am perfectly safe in assuming that he *had* one, asleep or awake. No man can *fall* unless he has been *up*. Your friend must *be* your friend before he can break your heart. God's grief is not that we *never come,* but that we do not *stay*. Every man has his dream. He is, so to speak, amphibious. Like certain denizens of the deep, he is a creature of two elements. He cannot stay submerged indefinitely: he must come up to breathe. I mean that, as a son of the Eternal, he must give his soul a chance.

> O, we're sunk enough, God knows:
> But not quite so sunk that moments,
> Sure though seldom, are denied us
> When the spirit's true endowments
> Stand out clearly from its false ones.

And I am thinking of those "sure though seldom moments" in which the soul rises to breathe. "There is a spirit in man." Carnal and material as he is on the under side of his nature, "there is a spirit in man." This is the world's tallest hope—this, and the

assurance that God will some day get at every man. Yes, every man has his dream.

Speaking of dreams reminds me that the world's estimate of the value of our sleeping fantasies has altered again. Time was when folks paid keen attention to dreams. You cannot read the Bible and leave out the dreams. Jacob's ladder at Bethel, Joseph's strange glimpse of his relation to his brothers, Ezekiel's wheels, Paul's sense of the need of Macedonia, were *dreams*. And some have gone so far as to affirm that man's first hint of immortality was given him by the reappearance, in dreams, of the loved and lost. People used to interpret their dreams with distressing literalness, harrying themselves accordingly, as some do still.

Then came the age of rationalism when everything seemed in peril of being explained, dreams included. Dreams were pathologically explained, in term of indigestion, or brain-storm, or what not. People reported their dreams merely to laugh at them, treated them as the inane vapors of unreality, signifying nothing for the soul.

Nowadays we think differently again.

Led on by such students as Myer, Hyslop, and Sir Oliver Lodge, we are almost inclined to admit that, after all, there may be somewhat of value in our dreams. It is by no means certain that our brains ever rest. Indications are that the subliminal mind works with most startling accuracy when we call ourselves "asleep." Enough marvels have been catalogued—missing articles located in sleep, mathematical problems worked out to perfect conclusions, telepathic messages, glints of light far too dazzling for daytime—marvels enough, I say, to make us dismiss the scientific sneer of a half century ago. Clairvoyance is not all charlatanism. Who shall dare set limits to the modes by which God makes his approach to the souls of his children? The universe is more spiritually fashioned and delicately set than we, as yet, are willing to allow. And I, personally, do not doubt that God, who employs sunsets and rainbows as teachers, who speaks through mountain silences and the lips of little children, may also make use of what we call "dreams."

But just now I am thinking of dreams of

a different sort. I mean the waking kind. I mean the kind of dream your sculptor must have before he sets his chisel against the marble, the kind every writer needs before he takes up his pen, the kind Jesus had as he fronted his cross.

Every beautiful thing ever done on earth was a dream first. Raphael dreamed the Sistine Madonna, and his magical brush merely filled in the outlines of what Raphael saw in his soul. Men dreamed America while the Indians were still dancing their war-dances observed of no foreign eye. Edison dreamed the phonograph in spite of his incredulous mechanics. Burbank dreamed his white blackberry and his spineless cactus against nature, so to say. And, on the other hand, the worst war of the ages is merely the coming true of the nightmare of militarism.

A recent article on dreams brought me up standing. It says that, instead of being illogical, dreams are the most inexorably logical things in the world. Neither cautions nor conventions hinder us in our dreams. If you are on a roof and want to step down to

the ground you do it in spite of Newton's laws. If your enemy annoys you you merely kill him, without regard to the Decalogue. If you love a woman you never bother about reciprocal affection—in your dreams. In our dreams we go where we like and return when we please, and neither Jack the Giant-Killer nor Aladdin with his wonderful lamp has anything on us. There is no such word as "impossible" in the vocabulary of dreams.

And our daydreams—what of them? When his officers reminded him that there were mountains in his way, Napoleon replied, "There are no Alps." For the man who dreams bravely enough Alps sink at his approach. Many of the common advantages of modern life were called "impossible" once. But "impossibles" become gloriously "possible" when men and women dream over them often enough! What statistician ever foresaw the wave of temperance sentiment which is sweeping over the world? Somebody dreamed—and kept on dreaming—and declined to wake up. Such dreams are the truest part of us. They indicate our holiest contribution to the world.

We shall be judged at last by our fidelity to our dreams. Of old, the brothers of one Joseph sneered when they saw him approaching: "Behold, the dreamer cometh." Just as contemporaries scoffed at Cyrus W. Field and his dream of an Atlantic cable; at Livingstone and his dream for Africa; at Jesus and his glorious dream for men. But Joseph, the dreamer, older grown and transplanted to a foreign soil, saved his practical brothers and their father from starving.

Whatever else one may do without, he can by no means do without his dream. No mother is fit to train her boy until she has dreamed great things over him. No man can run a business or build a bridge unless he has dreamed. If you have never yet idealized your friend, I doubt if he is worth having. Always the dream first—always the dream. And as to being a Christian—why, nobody can be one until God has given him a sunrise in his soul. You cannot follow our Lord until he has opened your soul. Jesus is the arch-poet of the ages. None other ever saw so much in men and women. The first thing he did for Peter and Zacchæus

and the woman at the well was to share his dream with them. And the immortal ministry of a converted Pharisee was simply the fulfillment of a certain dream which God gave on the Damascus Road.

So, of course, Demas had his dream. I do not know the date and fashion of it, but he had his dream. He was a man, and to expect a man to make heaven without the grace of a great dream is as irrational as to expect a whale to live and not come up to breathe.

But concerning Demas there is more to be said than merely that he *had* his dream. He lived it out in human terms, for a season. Twice the great apostle, writing from his Roman prison, refers affectionately to Demas. For a while his heart beat faster and his hands found no task too hard. I can guess how dear he became to his spiritual father. He trod the upper ways of his dream. And, so doing, he surpassed the achievement of some who have criticized him for falling away. O, the dreams that fade with advent of day! Have you waked in the morning trying to recall precisely what

it was you dreamed about, and gone through the forenoon haunted by a sense of beauty or truth escaped? Very distinctly I remember how some sentences pieced themselves together for me while I slept. I had dropped asleep trying vainly to make them fit, like a child puzzling over a desiccated map. Then, somehow, during the night, the whole thing came clear. I knew just how to do it, and I woke with a sort of sunrise in my heart, only to realize that the dream had gone. Shall I admit that, for weeks afterward, I tried by any available handle to open my door upon the joy of that dream? I knew I *had* the dream. I know it now. It is as real as any other experience of my life. Yet not one word could I recall: merely the glow of the joy.

But I am thinking of you and your dreams. Nor do I ask you to mention them aloud. All I want to do is to remind you of the wonder of them—and the tragedy of losing them.

"There are noondays struck from midnights." You have had them. Sitting in the church, or walking the familiar pave-

ments between home and office; over your newspaper or book, or in the house of mourning; thrilling with the advent of a new love or broken with some unexpected pain, you have seen the heavens open as truly as ever Saint Stephen did. God sent you a great moment. He disturbed you "with the joy of elevated thoughts." He let you see where you stood and what you might be. He gave you your dream. I do not know that you can even recall just what you saw or felt. I am content to remind you of it. Do not assure me that you never had it. You are human. And I make bold to say that no child of the Eternal Father ever gets through the journey without some intimation of the Father's will, and some glimpse of the Father's face. O, if you had made use of your dream!

Demas did—for a season; nobody knows just how long. His spiritual tragedy was quite different from yours. *You* never started in the way of your dream: Demas hit the trail and fell away. Once I had a toy engine which interested me keenly and disappointed me as bitterly. It looked as if

it was made to run. It *did* run. But it seemed to me I was always filling the boiler, and lighting the lamp underneath, and getting up steam. I could hear the giant within crying for outlet. And soon the tiny piston was spitting white jets of power. For a minute or two the wheel ran briskly, then stopped. The event had passed. Always before I could belt the toy engine to any "contraption" the engine stopped.

So in life. There are multitudes of Demases, always getting up steam, always starting merrily, and then quitting wearily. Think how many folks had a term or year of music lessons and could not play a hymn to-day. Think how many tables we learned, nor could tell the difference between apothecaries' and Troy weight to-day. Think of the errands we started on for God and never fulfilled. Think of the programs adopted and torn up after a spurt of zeal. Think of the slaveries we escaped from and went back to. Think of the vows we began to perform and forgot. And then guess the patience of God!

O, Demas, you have many comrades in

your short run of loyalty! We can understand you. We are built after the same pattern. The saddest entries a pastor makes in his Church Record must be made with invisible ink. When a member of our church transfers his fellowship to some other church I know exactly what to put down opposite his name. If he formally "withdraws" I can indicate that fact in plain English. If he dies I chronicle the fact that the church on earth has given up one more to the Father's house. Provision for all these entries is made in our Book of Discipline and Order. But when a disciple of Jesus grows cold merely; and his prayer loses its ring; and his face no longer shines; and he quietly drops out of the ranks, what entry shall I make? None is authorized; none is permitted. All I can do is to write, with anguish, in the diary my heart keeps: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." So far as we know Demas died a communicant of the early church. Maybe he did no great wrong to others: he merely forgot his dream.

Just a moment remains for noticing what

cost Demas his dream. It was the sin of a misplaced love. "Demas hath forsaken me," wrote his spiritual father, "having loved this present world." In other words, Demas had merely transferred his love from Paul to others, from God to the world. Love did it —misplaced love. Love accounts for all the tragedies as well as the felicities of life. Love weaves all the crowns of thorns as truly as the crowns of roses. Love is responsible for the sting not less than for the sweetness of life. All that a man has to do is to love the wrong things, or the right things wrongly. Hatred of good is the obverse side of love of evil. Scorn of God is a phase of an unworthy love of his creation. Demas misplaced his love—that was all.

He loved the present world as if it were permanent. As soot spoils a flower, as avarice spoils a face, as discord spoils a song, so a wrong love spoiled Demas's dream. Worldliness means misplaced love. I am glad that Paul did not tell us what particular form of worldliness cost Demas his dream. We always get into difficulty when we attempt to define worldliness. Worldliness

means loving the world and forgetting Him who gave it. I do not believe that anybody who accepts the world *reverently* can love it too well.

"Having loved this present world." To some people that means theaters and cards and dancing, with a few other indulgences thrown in. If the case were as simple as that! Worldliness is an essence. You may find it under the monk's cowl as truly as under a fashionable hat. A man may take it to church with him as easily as to a theater. I have heard prayers that were as worldly as dancing. No place, no shrine, no soul is secure against its intrusion. And when it once gains admittance the dream is spoiled.

V

THE MAN WHO FOUGHT THE STARS

Framed in a window, near the close of this story, I catch sight of a woman's face. Unfortunately, I cannot make it out as I should like; the lattice partly hides it. Whether it is a face wrinkled and seamed with years, or young with that deathless fire which burns in some women's eyes, I cannot say. What matter? It is the face of a woman watching as women only watch—of a mother watching for her boy. Now and again she leans close to the lattice, and you may hear her plead, "Why is his chariot so long in coming?" Possibly she would have hidden, suddenly, could she have had her prayer answered. Women are strange—almost as queer as men are. Not for half a world would they let you know how fond they are, how much and how long they watch. Besides, some men are such poor miserable

curmudgeons they object to being watched for, as mothers will.

But, O, the faces at the lattice! God be merciful to the boys who do not see the faces at the lattice! I wonder if the "new woman" will strain her eyes and ears at the lattice as our mothers did. I wonder. The last look I had from my mother was one January morning, as she watched me down the street. The next time I saw *her* she could not see *me*. But I used to *feel,* miles away, amid college tasks and college temptations, my mother watching. And, somehow, that sense of being watched for—not "watched," but watched *for*—helped bring me home unashamed. And I do not hesitate to say that through the years since the morning she watched me down the street I have kept the solemn, sweetening sense of being watched for. Did Sisera put up a bigger fight, that ancient day, as remembering the face at the lattice?

But the boy the woman watched for never came. She never heard the familiar rumble of his chariot wheels. If the chariot came back, it came empty. By and by the anxious

face disappeared from the window: there was no use to watch more. And another mother began the long vigil of grief for an unreturning son. I am to talk about the son who did not return. I am to try to tell you *why* he did not return.

And before I say anything else about this man who fought the stars I want to speak a word of sorrow concerning him. We do not always remember to do that. We are so righteously pleased to see bad sons get their deserts we fail to share the sorrow of the face at the lattice. While Becker, the New York lieutenant of police, was on trial for his life I followed the case with a sort of vindictive fever. When the State scored a good point against him I applauded, in my soul; when Becker's lawyers scored I groaned. 'Twould be a dreadful thing for such a criminal to escape the electric chair! Doubtless. (We are too slow and soft with lawbreakers in this country.) But, one day, the realization swept in upon me that I had not spent a moment in being *sorry* for Becker; sorry that a man of such talents went so terribly wrong; sorry for the ordeal

he must pass through; sorry that any son of God should come to such tragic end. I had been so keen to see justice done I forgot how justice feels to the man who suffers it. Such poor partners are we with God in redemption!

Honestly, did you never feel that the prodigal son's welcome was overdone? His stay-at-home brother has many admirers. We can understand his outburst of indignation, for we often feel the same way toward prodigals, returning or unreturned. Not the best robe and the fatted calf, but corned beef and the penitent's stool—that is what he ought to get. Not a place in the sun, but a place in the dark. This spreading of feasts for home-coming exiles seems as hysterical as the sending of flowers and women's photographs to condemned criminals. Nay, it is thoroughly bad morals.

Was Jesus wrong, then? Either *he was,* or *we are.* Worse than that. If this exquisite parable, over which so many tears have been shed, and which has put heart back into countless derelict sons and daughters of heaven, if this parable teaches the

wrong way to treat penitents, then Christianity, in its essence, is a mistake. I recall the case of a bankrupt sinner who was soundly converted. Before conversion he had swindled royally, and then taken the poor debtor's oath, to escape his creditors. But just as soon as news of his conversion spread among them his creditors renewed their claims eagerly. Surely, a converted debtor ought to pay his debts. He ought, most assuredly. But, to me, there was something ignoble in the scramble of those creditors for their money. The gospel is only incidentally a debt-paying affair. Primarily and fundamentally it is a message of inward redemption and reconstruction. It declares the infinite sorrow of God that any man or woman should go wrong. Deborah, in her famous song of exultation, might very naturally *rejoice* that the man who fought the stars had fallen. Jesus would have *grieved* that any brother of his should need to fall in order to Israel's safety.

Shall I pause to say that we usually are sorry for the wrong people? One of our

modern plays shows a group of roistering young folks starting out for an evening of merriment, but tarrying at the door long enough to wave a mocking good-by to the domestic drudge who must stay at home. In a shallow, half-contemptuous way, they were sorry for her, just as the bibulous man is sorry for the friend whose scruples make him decline, just as the lecherous man is sorry for his chaste brother. I suppose that the world outside the church feels very sorry for us within the church: we miss so much; our religious vows tie us up so short. And, what is worse, a good many of us have improved the occasion, to be sorry for ourselves. God forgive us! No man who walks with God is entitled to sympathy on *that* score. He is, rather, a silent candidate for the congratulations of two worlds.

I can tell you whom to be sorry for. The man who has no scruples against taking a drink, and who takes one whenever he wants it; the woman who has so far outgrown prudishness that she accepts the world as she finds it; the neighbors who can lie without wincing and be cruel with compunction;

in short, the folks who enter Sisera's fight against all the stars of God—these are the ones to be sorry for. Let us have done condoling with the Christian who does not *dare* "come down." Let us send our prayers and our yearnings after the children of the plain. I am thinking of that face at the lattice, and of its anguish when the boy comes not back. That is God. And he invites us to share his sorrow over the lost sheep of his fold.

But Sisera, the man who fought his unequal fight against the stars, what of him? What sort of man was he, at heart? Frankly, I do not know. Judging him by Deborah's exultation over his terrible fate, I might be disposed to class him with the reprobates. But, wait a moment. All we know against him is that he fought on the losing side. Certainly, he was not more ruthless than Barak, his conqueror; not so false as Jael, who slew him, and whom Deborah sang to the skies for the treacherous deed. Remember the face at the lattice, watching. Perhaps she of the anguished face could say that no mother ever had kinder son, or braver.

This is the most we can say, that he fought on the wrong side. And some of the best men and women God ever made have done that. Robert E. Lee suffers not by comparison with the noblest of his successful adversaries. Admiral Cervera was as gallant a sea-dog as Captain Philip. Men of equal loyalty and magnanimity are dying every day in opposing trenches.

The old-fashioned way of classifying people is played out. When I was a boy I thought of Democrats with disgust. I could not conceive how any self-respecting citizen could vote the Democratic ticket. I thought of the South as all but sodden in sin: *that* explained the "solidity." My first awakening came with the discovery that the South felt in precisely the same way toward the North. You cannot even draw a straight line between the church and the world; the line is as irregular as the coast of Maine. Marcus Aurelius was a heathen monarch; Leopold of Belgium nominally a Christian. Cornelius the centurion was *outside* the church; Ananias and Sapphira were *inside*. Benedict Arnold was the same individual—

so far as the census goes—both as patriot and traitor. *We* cannot draw the line. *We* cannot name all the saints, or all the sinners. *We* cannot assay men by the cut of their uniforms, or by the flag they fight under, or by their dialect. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." "The Lord knoweth them that are his"—and he is the only one that *does* know.

But this is not all there is to be said—that Sisera happened to fight on the wrong side. This also must be said: in a profound sense, no man is better than his cause. From the point I have just made you might infer that it makes little difference which side a man fights on—so long as he is honest. O, yes, it does. It makes *every* difference, save one, namely, that a man may fight on the wrong side and still be honest. All the other considerations emphasize the vast importance of fighting on the right side—not against the stars, but with them.

It was long ago noted that dissipated men are often most lovable men. Mothers will tell you that it was the dearest child that

went astray. The man who is damning himself with drink or debauchery is often a man with a heart as big as an ox's and as tender as a woman's. Not the smug but the generous; not the harsh but the all-loving—these help fill the ranks of the lost. If I had a favor to ask I could ask it more hopefully, sometimes, from the man of whose habits I am ashamed. I mean that there is about him a largeness of soul I do not always discover among the saints. O, but when you stop to think, that difference serves to accentuate the pity that he should be serving the wrong master. What could not the church accomplish if it could save to itself, and for the service of its ideals, all those great hearts that have missed the luminous trail to the Father's House?

You will hear it said that this neighbor or that is "too good for his business," that some particular saloon-keeper is "too good for the liquor business," or that some special sinner is "too good a man to do the things he does." I see the point. There is something in it. But the truth cuts both ways. If a man is too good for the business which

engrosses him, then he ought, by all means and at any cost, to get into some business worthy of him. If Michael Angelo was cut out for larger things than peddling peanuts, then he ought not stop short of finding the work God had for him to do. If Lincoln was too big and splendid for a dingy law office, then he must not stay there. If Phillips Brooks was too good for the business of sowing wild oats, then he must not engage in that business. For, soon or late, a man absorbs his business. He becomes an illustration of the things he does. He incarnates his practices. "Know ye not," cried the great apostle, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" And, eventually, we wear the mark as we have worn the livery of our master. Nothing is more hopeless than the attempt to touch pitch without having it stick to you.

"Can't I wear this dress into the mine?" asked a young woman, pointing to her white frock.

"Well," came the quick reply, "there is nothing to prevent you from wearing that

white dress in the mine, but it won't be white when you come out."

Smile at her folly if you will, but remember that you are smiling at yourself. We do things just as stupid, just as impossible, every day. We wear the garments of righteousness into unclean places—and then exclaim at the smut. We enlist against the stars and wonder that life is tragic. O, mother, with your face pressed against the lattice, the son you watch for will not come back. He may have been the best son in the world. How proud you were when his king promoted him to be captain of the host! But he cannot come back. He was on the wrong side.

For a moment, in closing, see what happened. See what kept Sisera from going back to the eager face at the lattice. "The stars in their courses fought against" him. Needless to say, that is poetic explanation. The stars do not "fight"—either *in* their courses or *out of* them. I suppose Deborah referred to a thunderstorm which broke upon Sisera at the fateful moment, or perhaps to a shower of hailstones, such as helped

Israel defeat the Philistines once; such a celestial interposition as scattered the Spanish Armada upon the shores of England, or, according to legend, defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. Those were credulous days in which ordinary phenomena of nature were supernaturally explained.

But here is the truth I am after—that even the stars in their courses, all the enginery of heaven and earth is confederate against the man who does wrong. Ours is a wonderful world. It is wonderful for its chemistry, for its geometric precision, for its vital processes. You cannot turn anywhere without running against wonder. And

"Every common bush aflame with God."

But the most wonderful thing about the world is the moral purpose streaking it, as with veins of gold. "Nothing is more certain" (to adapt the famous lines of Spencer) "than that we are ever in the presence" of *moral purpose*. The world is pitched to good. Its movement is that way. And the man who does wrong is fighting

the universe. The railroads had their day, and a long day it was. They fattened on injustice and piracy. Rebating flourished like the "green bay-tree." But 'twas a losing fight. The doom of iniquity is sealed as soon as it is begun. Not even Wall Street can successfully fight the stars in their courses. The American saloon has had its day. Alcohol, the world over, has reigned defiant and demonic. Who shall describe the fashion of its rule? But something ails the king to-day. The modern crusade against the traffic is merely the coalition of the stars.

Men who are doing wrong, the way looks easy! That is one reason you choose it: it looks so natural. You are misinformed. "The way of the transgressor is hard." There is more hope of gathering figs of thorns than of winning out in a campaign of evil. "The end of those things is death." You may have a good time for a season. You may even die crowned with fictitious crowns. But the silent stars are against you. All the inherent good of the universe is your enemy. You have God as your foe.

Though he loves *you* with an everlasting love, still he is bound to defeat *you* because you are on the wrong side.

I need not dwell upon the special tragedy of Sisera. Jael violated all laws, human and divine—save one—when she perfidiously drove the tent-pin into the temple of the exhausted Sisera. The one law she executed unwittingly, I suppose, was the law against fighting God. It does not so greatly matter how the end came to that doughty warrior. It had to come. He was fighting the stars.

VI

THE MAN WHO HOODWINKED HIMSELF

It remained for our most strenuous and always interesting President to rescue Ananias from partial oblivion by naming a club in honor of him. We had already similarly honored other notables in the early church. We had brotherhoods named for Saint Paul and Saint Andrew; Dorcas Societies and Sisters of Mary. Now, at length, we have an Ananias Club with a large membership well distributed throughout the world. People who never read the story of Ananias in the Bible are familiar with his name. And some make alarmingly free to propose neighbors and others for membership in his club. In the interest, therefore, of accuracy and fairness it is suggested that we look into the matter a little further. It may subsequently appear that some supposed full members of the club are

not even eligible to membership; and that others who count themselves *outsiders* should join at once—or mend their ways.

You do not make a "soldier" by putting uniform on a man; nor a true lodge-man by giving him the signs, grips, and passwords of the order; nor a scholar by paying his way through college; nor a Christian by teaching him a creed. Nor can you grade sinners by outward marks. Sin is a less clumsy, more elusive thing than that. It is always of the *heart*. Every member of a certain ancient order will instantly recall the moment in which he stood near a venerable altar, blindfolded, uncertain of foot, and answered this question: "Where were you first made a member of our Fraternity?" His answer was very simple—I wonder if he realized how profound. "In my heart," he said, "in my heart."

Why, you never make a soldier or a statesman, a salesman or a Saviour, anywhere else. *Always in the heart.* This, I fear, is the trouble with some of our so-called friends: they were "made" in a restaurant, at a card-table, in a drawing room—not in

the *heart*. It is the explanation of some unhappy women, alas, they were "made" mothers in hospitals or palatial chambers—not in the *heart*. Certainly it is clue to one tragic weakness of the church: we have so many members who were "made" Christians otherwhere than in the *heart*. You never know anybody until you know the heart of him. And while I recognize the perils of wearing your "heart upon your sleeve for daws to peck at," it is well to remember that in proportion as we succeed in concealing our hearts, we render ourselves unknown, either for praise or blame.

From the physician's standpoint folks may be classified as sick or well. But the wise physician does not pause there. He calls one patient anæmic, another rheumatic, another typhoid, and another tuberculous. Nor does the wisest physician stop *there*. He knows that no two cases of the same disease are quite alike. Each has its individual history, each its personal symptoms, each its special peril. This is the frequent despair as it is the eternal pique of medicine. Shall we hope to find the matter different when we

study diseases of the soul? Easy enough to classify sick souls as liars and thieves, misers and prodigals, cruel and deceitful. Say that Edgar Allan Poe was a drunkard, and Lord Byron a rake, and great Dante a gambler. Call Benedict Arnold a traitor, and Louis XIV a despot, and Nero a tyrant. Open your Bible and put Pilate the coward, David the adulterer, and Cain the murderer in their respective classes. And when you have completed your list you have not gone very far. There is a profound sense in which every transgressor belongs in a class all his own. Differentiation between microbes, under a powerful lens, is child's play as compared with the separation of man from man for the purposes of judgment on earth. But God can do it. He *alone* can do it. O, if we were oftener willing to leave to him the task! Warden Osborne, of Sing Sing Prison, in a recent address, showed how pitilessly inept is our penological scheme. Five years for burglary, twenty for manslaughter, life imprisonment or the death penalty for murder—as if we could grade sins as we do coffee or cattle! One boy

robs his employer's till to buy medicine for a sick mother; another boy takes the money to play the races. Both are thieves in the eyes of the law; both receive the same sentence, and spend the same number of dreary months behind the bars. By contrast, "O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God." No wonder that David cried: "Let my sentence come forth from *thy* presence." Our wisest judgments are but clumsy approximations to the unerring, beautiful fairness of God. He reads the heart as we read ledgers and newspapers.

But Ananias, the man who hoodwinked himself; how shall we classify him? Evidently, Roosevelt thought of this ancient unworthy as a typical case, else the famous club had been differently named. But to call Ananias a liar is about as vague as to call Frederick Douglass a Negro, or Pocahontas an Indian, or Marcus Aurelius a Roman. Ananias was none of your common, low-bred falsifiers. With the ordinary untruthful person Ananias would have been as much ashamed to confess kinship as you

would with spies and bomb-plotters. Judged by the record, Ananias was a more than average good citizen; and, but for the tragic event, he might have been remembered as a better than average churchman. He will repay our study, this man for whom Roosevelt named his club.

In the first place, and superficially, Ananias was a man who failed to live up to his name. He had a beautiful name. But he failed to live up to it. It meant, "favored of God." Somewhere I read of a father taking his three motherless boys to the cemetery, and standing with them by their mother's grave. As the strange silence of the place crept into their breasts he bade them read their own names, cut beneath that of their mother's, on the stone. Then he warned them, "Lads, if you ever do anything to dishonor your mother's name, your own will be erased from the stone." Was it Jessie Dean's father who, in the Bonnie Briar Bush, struck from the Bible record his disgraced child's name?

To have a good name and then to live up to it! I recall a home in which two proud

young parents were showing me their new baby. Naturally, I asked the wee stranger's name. They had not been able to agree as yet. O, the sweet hurrying days of choosing a name!—days in which no name seems wonderful enough to match the new wonder in a woman's arms. And I, spectator of their joy, ventured to suggest that in deciding upon a name they pick one for their boy to *live up to.* Not a pretty name perhaps, nor an euphonious, even; but a name which might command all the resources and faith of the bearer. So, at least, God gives us our names. Remember how he changed Abram's and Jacob's, and Saul's. I wonder if this is what the Book means when it says, "*I* have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." And John wrote rapturously about the "white stone" with the new name written within; a name which none but God and the recipient knew.

To live up to your name, I mean the name by which you are known to God. On earth they call you John or Will, Louise or Mary. What do they call you in the Lamb's Book of Life? No particular task to live up to

the name your *mother* gave you—unless perchance the name happens to be Theodore—meaning gift of God; or Dorothy—also signifying God's gift; or some such challenging name. But to live up to the name God gives you—O, that takes all there is of a man or a woman. God's name for you involves his program for your life. It means you as God dreams over you. It holds his beautiful ideal. Bad enough to disappoint the mother who gave you your earthly name. Worse to disappoint the friends who, in love, call you by that name. But to disappoint God who called you by your *celestial* name—have you thought of the tragedy of that? Here in the Record is hint of the chagrin of Peter and his fellows when Ananias fell below his name. But who shall measure the grief of God?

But to go on with my story. Ananias loved the "odor of sanctity." Indeed, I think that is exactly what he loved: he cared more for the "odor" than for the "sanctity" itself. The flower did not interest him: he enjoyed the *perfume* of it—as many a modern woman dotes on bottled extract of

roses or violets, and would hardly cross the street to possess the blossoms. Thus some people patronize grand opera. Really they are bored, but they sit through whole evenings of the masters, and with a benevolent look on their faces. Music is a fine art. Grand opera is perhaps the acme of music. To love great music is an index of culture. So they pay fabulous prices for seats, and immolate themselves for the time being, and "patronize" the opera. Thus some people love books. They like to have them around —unopened. I recall the obvious pride with which a friend of mine showed me his library. He had spent a small fortune upon those shelved treasures—particularly upon the bindings. What beautiful books they were —first editions, authors' imprints, and all that. And I do not think my friend had ever opened one of them except to examine the quality of the paper. He might just as well have done as they say one rich man did—bought the *backs* of the books and then locked the cases securely.

So some people love goodness. They like the look of it, and particularly the reputa-

tion of it. Doubtless it is the most respectable, not to say admirable, thing in the world. It has a fixed currency, like the pound sterling. It opens doors, and evokes smiles, and makes certain a glowing eulogy at the end. Hence they love it—after a fashion. Indeed, I may say that it would be difficult to escape loving it—after a fashion. Goodness starts up the bells in our better selves. It flings rainbows athwart the most leaden skies. It makes things sprout in our souls. As Sinclair says of one of her characters: "The sound of that singing made Ransome feel noble: and there is nothing more insidiously dangerous than feeling noble." Similarly, the wind and whiff of goodness give us a "noble feeling." Like a child in a new suit of clothes we imagine everybody is admiring us.

Here was Ananias's trouble. He had fallen in love with the *aspect* of goodness, as Henry VIII did with the portrait of his third wife. He saw other disciples selling their property and laying the price of it "at the apostles' feet." He heard the fervent "Amens" of the spectators. He wanted

to be known as belonging to the heroic class, and to hear his name spoken in praise. So, according to the Record, he sold a possession, and—but I must not run ahead of my story. Let me point another moral before I remind you what the man did with the proceeds of the sale.

Notice, please, that Ananias was willing to pay something for a good reputation. Granted that he was more concerned about being *known* as a good man than with *being* a good man, still he was perfectly willing to pay for the advantage. And for that I yield him honor, for there *are* folks who sigh like tornadoes for goodness, and decline to pay a cent in self-denial. If they could be made holy overnight by miracle, so they would never *want* to take another drink, or perpetrate another fraud—and all without conscious expense to themselves—well and good. But, like a certain young man who scolds God, and recently flung the Bible across the floor because God does not *make* him stop drinking in spite of himself, so the people I am describing want to be good without bestirring their souls.

Ananias was different. He was willing to pay a fairly generous price for the reputation, even, of piety. So, when he had got the price of a valuable piece of land, he "brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet." And mingled with the satisfaction he had in doing a praiseful thing, was the sense of having driven a shrewd bargain. He had eaten his cake, yet had part of it left. He was like most of us. Some of us are willing to pay liberally for the sound and smile of religion. We really enjoy having our religious feelings played upon. We come to church, and sing the hymns, and help pay the preacher. Indeed, we thoroughly approve of the church as an institution—and would swear at our children if they played truant from Sunday school. I say "swear," for swearing is one of the personal pleasures some men decline to give up. Swearing, or a social drink, or sharp practices, or what you will! They buy supper tickets, and make subscriptions to this and that, and speak enthusiastically of the church, and even reverently of Christ. But there are *some* things they do not pro-

pose to let go. So they keep back part of the price—as Ananias did. And the rest of us, the members of the church, how much better do we? Of course we do not use profanity, and we take communion, and we deny ourselves certain pleasures that we should like very much—very much indeed; but it is hard to go the whole way. We pay part of the price, and keep back the remainder. Would you give up also your grudges? and your bad temper? and your side-stepping of soul?

But see what Ananias did. As I have remarked already, he was not a common liar. He was not at all the prototype of certain gentlemen whom Roosevelt proposed for membership in the Ananias Club. The original Ananias would have scorned to *tell* a lie. By so much he was the superior of his wife. She lied outright when Peter questioned her about the transaction. Ananias said nothing, so far as the Record shows. He merely laid his pile at the apostles' feet, as if his gift were complete. He *told* no falsehood; he only *acted* it—as we often do. We have not yet become so

Christian that we abhor *acted* lies. I do not mean that we are to tell everything we know, or all we plan, even by wordless admission. There are deceits as sweet and innocent as that practiced by Jesus, on the day of his resurrection, when as he neared the end of his walk with the two disciples, "He made as though he would have gone further." Our dear human Lord! He also wanted to be entreated.

I am not thinking of any of the pretty falsehoods love tells *because it is love.* I am thinking of the falsehoods which cover our sins: lies of fear, lies of shame, lies of soul. And concerning such falsehoods we need to remember that they may be *acted* as truly as *uttered.* When some one spoke falsely concerning your friend or your Lord, and you said nothing in protestation, you shared the lie. When you accepted praise to which you were not entitled, and smiled, and looked the part, what was that?

But I have not yet said the worst thing about Ananias's deed. He had lied to God. As Peter put it: "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost?"

Bishop Goodsell used to tell of meeting my father, early one inclement winter morning, hurrying along the streets of New Haven as if life depended upon haste: and when the Bishop asked the reason for such haste, at such an hour, my father replied: "I am looking for a man who lied to the Holy Ghost. He promised me to be at the altar last night, and he was not there. He lied to God." And, friends, I am thinking of the falsehoods we have told God. Remember the time you were sick, and promised God that if he would spare you . . . or your baby was dying and you made God a vow; or your business was tottering, and you whispered to God. I do not know what you said. If I did I would not repeat it. All I am asking is if you have kept your word, or have lied to God.

And the tragic sequel to the story of Ananias's sin. It is not necessary to dwell upon it. All sorts of explanations have been offered. Was it horror at discovery that struck him dead? I do not know. But he died, as no man ought to be willing to die—with a falsehood in his soul.

VII

THE MAN WHO DEFEATED HIS FRIENDS

I DOUBT if the small child understands, ordinarily, *why* he is punished. He may accept it with due meekness or comprehensible defiance, just as his elders accept their allotments of hardship; but I do not believe he *understands* it. That his suffering has specific meaning is an idea which escapes him as totally as it sometimes escapes us under chastisement. Mind, I am not questioning the right or need of punishment. An unwhipped child is usually insufferable as a child, and impossible when he grows up. All I am saying is that he seldom understands *why* he is whipped; and that until he does understand, the real value of the punishment is lost. Meantime you will continue, doubtless, to administer upon his person. And he will continue to submit in a more or less chastened spirit—chiefly because you are stronger than he.

Thus, apparently, Joshua felt when his soldiers came reeling back from their first battle at Ai. The obvious fact was defeat. His men had not been able to stand before their enemies. And in blinding bitterness of soul Joshua flung himself upon his face before the ark—just as we do in our first outbursts of grief or shame. All that Joshua knew, all he cared, for the moment, was pain. Then God gave the cue, as he will always do, soon or late, if we fling our hurt hearts before the ark of the covenant. God always explains. Not as we does he punish, in petulance or anger. Never, as we, for the sake of showing off superior strength. "His judgments are true and righteous altogether." Man with a wound in the soul; woman of sorrows who "break your bread with blinding tears," there's a reason. I do not pretend to name it for you; I do not even guess how soon God will let you know. All that I affirm is that the good God sends no child of his limping and bleeding for naught. Misery is by no means an evidence of the divine indifference. Rather it is sure indication that God is in his world. Whether

one suffer for his own sin, as Achan did later in our story; or for the sins of another, as the soldiers did at Ai, remember, there's a reason. And one of the finest functions of a liberal education is to *find* that reason.

Tradition gives to a falling apple, in a garden at Woolsthorpe, credit for hinting to Isaac Newton the universal law of gravitation. But suppose the famous mathematician had not been looking, or had been looking only as dogs look. You cannot teach laws to a dog. Let the same falling apple strike him on the head, and he may growl at the disturbance, or walk about the tree inquisitively, or change his place of repose. But not in a thousand æons can you teach Newton's dog what God taught Newton that day. Man is different. He is a rational being, as we say. He asks questions. He demands the reason for a fact. He puts two and two together. He not only hears the thunder; he finds out *why* it thunders. He not only sees hair turn white with age or pain; he explains in terms of phagocytes and coloring matter the strange bleaching process. He feels some strange fire in his

bones—of love or rage or jealousy—and he rests not until he understands what it means. That is part of the glory of being human, that, by dint of long training, and with God always giving broad hints, we finally learn to put two and two together.

But what is the use of higher mathematics unless we learn to put two and two together in morals? I know some very wise people who cannot do that. At lunch table recently my host pointed across the room to a prosperous-looking man whose name is a byword of reproach in the city. Married, father of grown children, bound by a hundred chains to a life of truth and honor—I forbear to offend your ears by details of his shameless life. Indeed, I refer to him merely as an instance of the man who can figure interest and discounts and all that, and cannot count up to three in morals. Life, for him, is a series of indulgences, unrelated and uneventful. It seems never to have occurred to him that for *every* sowing there is inevitable harvest; and that "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap." Byron once sang, with infinite bitterness:

My days are in the yellow leaf,
The fruit and flowers of life are gone:
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.

But that sort of end is never of divine appointment except as retribution. I wonder if in those dreary days of disillusion Byron ever took time to put two and two together. Even though *he* escaped the grim tragedy of reaping, *somebody* must reap his crops. A few times the curtain of mist lifts from Saint Helena to furnish glimpses of a man passionately sad, unutterably broken and yet impressive in his decay, like Melrose Abbey. But Napoleon, crying out against the fates, was really lifting voice against himself. When some one reminded him that "man proposes and God disposes," Napoleon arrogantly replied, "I am he that proposes and disposes." O, that his lesson might have sufficed for our day! The same "mills," the same "gods" and the same fine flour of death, whether in the year 1815 or the year 1915.

But back to my story. When Joshua got up from his posture of grief and took time

to look about, following the cue from God, he learned something which neither he nor we can afford to forget. He learned that tragedy usually has a moral root. It was not *fate* that defeated his soldiers before Ai. Nor were the troops themselves blameworthy. Survivors of that first ineffectual charge went up against the same enemy, next time, in triumph.

Meantime something was morally wrong. Under a tent, within the Hebrew lines, were fresh marks of a spade. And beneath the hastily replaced earth was Achan's hoard, buried there in defiance of express command. Gold, silver, and a beautiful Babylonish garment, hidden away, for the present, by one man's covetousness—that was all. But somehow, in consequence, the man's friends marched up to defeat and back in dismay. Somehow, in the providence of the good God, Achan's evil unfitted his comrades.

The moral roots of tragedy—I do not believe that the laws of cohesion or sound are more plainly demonstrated. While the Russian armies were falling back from one city after another in 1915, all the world won-

dered; the same world that had wondered at their victorious sweep a few months earlier. Then the truth leaked out, as truth sometimes will, in spite of the censor. Bureaucrats were haggling over commissions and holding up army contracts. Nothing to them that their brothers should needlessly die, and Russian arms should suffer shame, as compared with the advantage of additional roubles in the vaults of the money-changers at home. O, thrice perfidious men —false to your country, your brothers, and yourselves! I wonder if the world will ever know the grim moral roots of a hundred disasters in the war?

For that matter the war itself has moral roots. I do not presume to dig them up to view—whether in the conduct of Servia, or the land-hunger of Austria, or the revengefulness of France, or the hauteur of England, or the megalomania of Germany. Let God say, in his own time and way. All I am saying is that a upas tree which has scattered its deadly seeds across a continent must grow from a moral root. And the final reckoning for the crime will be, not at the

banks and increased taxes, nor yet in terms of human suffering, but before the Great White Throne. Somebody sinned vastly. Perhaps the sin took a hundred years to ripen. But the fearful slaughter is the terrible harvest of sin. "Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Or see this truth in narrower fields. Once Mirabeau, in some respects the finest product of the revolutionary era in France, rose to address the Chamber of Deputies. And his auditors, accustomed to his furious invective, braced themselves for the assault. For once, however, he seemed to falter. His voice went suddenly weak, and he, after a pitiful attempt to recover himself, sank confused and humiliated into his seat. Faintness? Stage fright? Unpreparedness? No, none of these: merely the Nemesis of an old sin which, as he confessed later, seemed to rise out of the shadows and personate itself accusingly beside him. His public discomfiture was the bitter reaping for sowing the wind.

Into the home of a young couple, for whom I performed the marriage ceremony,

came a little child, eagerly looked for and greeted with joy. But, alas! the joy died on the lips of the parents. And when, a year later, the baby died, even the parents had to say, humbly, "Thank God." The baby was hopelessly blind from birth—terrible penalty for somebody's sin. I do not name the transgressor: I do not know. But *all* of us know, or ought to know, that congenital blindness almost invariably argues somebody's sin. Do not ask me why an innocent baby should be cursed for a fault not its own. Nor ask me why a father and mother, guiltless perhaps as our first parents, should be compelled to break their hearts. Ask me, rather, why our race is so marvelously one that every harvest must be gathered, whether for happiness or shame. Ask yourself if, taking all things into account, you could even imagine a better world.

Mind you, I have no salt for wounds, save as salt may help heal. It is not in my heart to afflict those who have already suffered enough. I do not even intimate that *you* sowed the seed of the tragedy which has

riven your heart, or broken your fortune, or desolated your home. All I venture to say is that the real root of the tragedy is presumably moral. Blighted bodies, wrecked fortunes, shattered faith, sundered friendships—these, with all other bitter blooms of earth, spring from sowings of sin.

And so we come back to Achan for a second lesson: the apparent disproportion between the fault and the penalty. If Achan could have paid the full penalty *himself!* In that case we might offer no objection. But, think of it! On the one hand a pile of unrighteous booty hidden under a tent; on the other hand a defeated army. God need not have taken out of the skins of scores or hundreds of innocent men the price of one man's sin. The effect seems altogether out of proportion to the cause. So we constantly feel in the presence of life's major tragedies. For example, the Baltimore fire. I do not at the moment recall, if indeed I ever knew, where the responsibility for the disaster was placed—whether in some piece of obvious carelessness, or in a defective wire, or where. No matter. The blame was personal. In

the last analysis *somebody* was at fault. And the terrible harvest of flame seems quite out of proportion to the seed of wrong. Or the Lusitania! Whether you blame Von Tirpitz, or a submarine commander acting contrary to orders, or the agent of the line, or the captain of the great ship—or the man who really started the war, you must blame *somebody*. Guilt is never impersonal. Somebody sinned. And the event seems too big for the cause. Or take the case of the epidemic which raged through my parish one winter, claiming as victims one in each hundred of the city's population. Out of the angry investigation which followed, one fact stood clear as day—that the scourge was unnecessary and inexcusable. *Somebody* was to blame, either the magnate who owned the water supply, or an unnamed patient, the germs of whose ailment found their way into the reservoir. *Somebody to blame.* But by what right should an entire community pay in dollars and pain for one man's sin?

Take the truth anywhere you will, and you find the same instinctive outcry against it. But tell me: if you wanted to mend

things, where would you begin? The same law that, in its operation, yields such harvests of death and woe also guarantees all generous fruitage of courage and kindness and self-denial. How are you going to immunize the world against hurt and not at the same time make it immune to blessing? If you sterilize the soil of your garden, you render it as incapable of bearing wheat and roses as of growing ugly harvests of weeds. This law of God which assures the farmer "thirty, sixty, a hundredfold" for every grain he plants, is no less divine when it gives big crops to single seeds of sin. Would you prefer a harvest-law that promised two potatoes only for each whole one planted? The whole truth of pasteurized milk is this: that by the process you have destroyed *both* the good and the bad germs. Pasteurized milk is, in some respect, more dangerous than the natural fluid. It has lost its law. Will you have life "pasteurized," made "fool-proof," as we say, or as God *intended* it—and as God will doubtless keep it, whatever our mood? Better accept the universe as we find it, making it better as we may,

but falling in reverent wonder before its processes.

And what is more important, may the good God help us to sow those seeds only of whose reapings we shall have no occasion to be ashamed, either in our own lives or in the lives of others. Says Francis Thompson: "Thou canst not stir a flower without troubling a star." No man sins except as making harder the battle of every human brother. Soldiers on the firing line feel their weapons turn in their hands while the guilty hoard lies in Achan's tent.

And this brings us back to Achan, the man who defeated his friends. Unfortunately, or otherwise, there is not much time left to study the man. All I can do is to name his sin. An eminent priest says that every sin in the catalogue has been confessed to him—all except *one*. He says that nobody ever yet confessed to him the sin of covetousness. So specious, so deadening, so like the "father of lies," is the sin of Achan. By the way, Achan *did* confess, whereas few of us will ever admit to ourselves our fault, if the fault is cupidity. His neighbors

shuddered when Richard Croker once admitted that he was "in business for his own pocket all the time." It was so brutal. We prefer softer names for certain sins. But I wonder if in the world there is a more *destructive* sin. Tally is constantly furnished us of the victims and havoc of alcohol. Statistics are given to indicate the widespread results of certain "social sins"—so called. But I do not think anybody has ever attempted to figure the loss of some of our gains. Sweatshops, crowded alleys, squalid tenements, starvation wages, brother against brother—and a subtle poison everywhere—these represent the bitter harvest of greed.

VIII

THE MAN WHO ADJOURNED THE MEETING

Some one says that the execution of Edith Cavell, in Belgium, was worth a million men to England. That is to say, the moral heat begotten of that deed fused more patriotic purposes, and rallied to the colors more laggards than could be secured by a hundred Parliamentary calls. Not because the victim happened to be a woman, nor because her previous ministry to men of all flags had been so Christlike, nor yet because all appeals for clemency were apparently disregarded, but because she was denied a right we hold as sacred and inviolable as the throne of God—the right to a "day in court." Let it appear that Miss Cavell *had* her day in court, and we may choke back the residue of our anger at the manner of her taking off. These are days in which human blood runs in torrents. Hers was not more sacred

than others. But printed in letters of fire in our Constitution, and wrought up with the holiest fibers of our natures, is the conviction of the right to a day in court. Not even the worst criminal forfeits it. Between his crime and his expiation of it, *one day* is his—his day in court.

I speak of it now merely for the sake of reminding you that *God* always gives it. From him we got the idea. The sanctity I speak of grows from a seed dropped out of heaven. The soil may be human, but the seed is divine. Plato taught that every earthy thing—a flower, a face, an institution—is an approximation to or a poor copy of a celestial idea. In this instance the famous Athenian was gloriously right. Our guarantee of a day in court is meager adumbration of the right which *God* vouchsafes every pilgrim of the ways of earth. Our calm or fevered insistence upon such claim, at the hands of men, is merely our earthly assertion of a right which *God* never denies. Reverently I assert that God could better afford to admit to paradise every "Tom, Dick, and Harry," washed and un-

washed, than to let the veriest vagabond miss his day in court. If necessary, a second probation, and a third, and a tenth, rather than hurry one soul into despair, without chance to face his accusers, and know the charges, and say his best word for himself.

But Felix—the man who adjourned the meeting—I am thinking of him, and of how wonderfully God gave him his day in court. Felix was pretty thoroughly bad—measured even by the lax standards of his own time. He was a worse man than any to whom I am speaking. In actual conduct, if not in essence, he would outclass any sinner of our city. He was cruel, rapacious, false. In short, he worked out on regal scale all the vices of his slave-nature. I have reread his story, with hope of hitting upon some redeeming trait. And I confess with pain that I have not found it. I am certain it must have been there, only I have not found it. Yet, God gave Felix his day in court: Felix the blood-thirsty, Felix the crook, Felix the dissolute—even to him God gave a chance.

Shall I pause to remind you what a dif-

ferent world this would be if we became proficient in the practice of God's way with offenders? We are so pitilessly quick to condemn. Doubtless the exigencies of war may sometimes justify the use of a "drumhead court-martial"; but the exigencies of everyday life never do. Miss Cavell had far greater respite than we commonly grant transgressors of our personal plans and conventions. I am not likely to forget the scalding letter written me by a man whom I had "read out of the church," so to speak. He had been accused of shameful fault. Scandal threatened. And after anxious conference with certain officials of the church, I sent him word that he must resign his Sunday school class at once. I did not name the allegation. I assumed that, being guilty, he knew. And this is part of his reply: "You have constituted yourself judge, jury, and prosecuting attorney, and have found a verdict without giving me one day in court."

It was true. I had done just that. Possibly, in the same circumstances, I might be tempted to do the same thing again. God

knows I had no spleen against the man; I was trying to save the church. But think of the possible hurt to another's soul. And, then, ask yourself if in the ordinary relationships of personal life, such a hurt is ever warranted. The guiltiest man you know has an inalienable right to his day in court. Siberia is a sunny clime as compared with the bleak lands to which, without chance to say a word on their own behalf, we exile our brothers and sisters. Maybe your friend was as false as you called him. Maybe he deserved every bitter thought you have given him. Maybe he knows why the grass has grown on the path between his door and yours. Are you sure? Did you give him his day in court? Have you heard all he had to say for himself, as you in his place would have claimed right to say it? Perhaps. But I do not hesitate to say that we have flung away friendships which might be ours still, had we given the accused friend his day in court. Once the notion took John Ruskin to build a chalet in Switzerland. But the coveted chalet was never built. As soon as he began to negotiate for land neighbors

became suspicious. The more they thought about it, the more sure they became of some ulterior motive on his part. Probably he had located a gold mine or a coal vein on the premises. So they put the price up, until Ruskin relinquished his plan. O if dreams of Swiss chalets were the finest things spoiled by the breath of poison! Reputations blasted, hopes sunk in midnight, homes shattered, hearts driven mad with agony—these are the higher toll. And think of the loss to ourselves.

They threw a stone, you threw a stone,
I threw a stone that day:
Although their sharpness bruised his flesh,
He had no word to say.

But for the moan he did not make
To-day I make my moan:
And for the stone I threw at him,
My heart must bear a stone.

But suppose we always gave the benefit of a day in court? Would failure to take advantage of it prove the accused one guilty "as charged"? Tradition has it that one of our most conspicuous public men bore to his grave the stain of a sin not his own. At

least, he never refuted the slander, even when he seemed likely to miss the White House. If he was innocent, why didn't he speak? That would have been the easy thing to do. He never did it: and to this day most people assume his guilt. But in the neighborhood of a former parish lives a woman whose name you would instantly recognize were it called, a woman who says that he took the blame to shield another man—and carried the blame, unwhimpering, to his grave. Ah, friends, sometimes denial is not the greatest use to make of your day in court. Sometimes to seal one's lips, to let the court do its worst, and to carry out into the open day or into the blackest cells another's secret, is to be most like Jesus Christ, who, challenged, "answered to never a word."

But Felix and his day in court. What a scene it was! Tradition says that the hall was marble, part of the splendid guilty palace which great Herod built, and within which he passed sentence upon his own sons: where Salome danced the voluptuous, deadly dance that cost John his head; and where Herod Agrippa "breathed out his hypo-

critical soul." "From the days of Herod downward blood stuck to every stone." In such brilliant setting God gave Felix his day in court. *Felix?* I suppose that, offhand, you would pick Paul as the man on trial. At least Felix was in the judge's seat and Paul in the dock. But as the great apostle, with burning heart and throbbing utterance, poured out his great story, the haughty man in the imperial seat went white and weak. Paul knew his man—and the guilty, beautiful woman at the procurator's side. For that matter, all Jerusalem knew, and rolled the wretched scandal under its tongue. It was not necessary to mention names. It rarely is. God's law is terribly personal. All Paul needed to do was to reason of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and "Felix trembled." I fancy Drusilla's lip curling. When a woman is bad she is harder and more brazen than a man is. But Felix could not have kept from trembling if the whole Roman Senate had been present. Felix's soul was answering. God was giving Felix his day in court.

As he constantly does. If you had the

misfortune to read May Sinclair's volume, The Confused Maze, you will remember the fateful moment in which the man, stumbling his way upstairs, followed the beam of the beckoning candle. And the door shut. And it was inky black in the hallway. And you knew that another son of God had gone wrong. But do you recall, also, the vast soul-sickness which came to the man next day? Somehow he shrank from himself—as a man always does in frank sight of his sin. Daytime mocked him. Innocent birds seemed to be scolding him. Life tasted bad. Ah, yes, God was trying to give him his day in court: the good God, the all pitiful God! Some one describes a visit to Benedict Arnold, in Paris, and the unutterable hunger in the traitor's eyes. O, if he could only come home! Asked if there was anything he wanted, he replied, infinitely sad, "Only a friend." The wages of sin: first thirty thousand dollars, and the praises of England for betraying West Point: then flight over seas, and exile, and loneliness, and the ashen "apples of Sodom." And God! Somehow one never travels far and

fast enough to escape God. And even remorse is God's way—one of his ways—of giving the transgressor his day in court. When Arnold asked if it would be safe for him to return to America, his visitor said, sadly, "No." His outraged countrymen would never give him a day in court. But *God* would. God did.

Did you ever have a little child look you in the eye and ask you a question that searched you like light and fire? "Are you a good man?" "Why don't we have a blessing at the table in our house?" O, the disturbing questions of God's small messengers! Sometimes 'twould be easier to pass through the third degree in a police court than to submit to the guileless cross-examination of a child. I mention it merely as another instance of the ways God has of giving to his wayward children their day in court.

But how shall I hope to suggest, even, all the multitudinous ways and the multifarious voices of God—and all of them merciful? Let us have done thinking of God as a ubiquitous Pinkerton Service, trying to catch us in wrong. Let us rather think

of him as standing for our day in court; guaranteeing the veriest rascal a chance to rise to the dignity of saying, "Father, I have sinned." The trembling of Felix was a sign. It was a sign of God at hand, as surely as the trembling of the horse in the neighborhood of wild beasts, or the trembling of the bird under the eye of the snake, is a way of divine protection. Indeed, I sometimes fancy that there is no real "trembling" save that which attests the proximity of God. Again and again the Bible speaks of the trembling which God sends upon his disobedient people. God made Felix shiver in the seats of the mighty as Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." And that trembling which made Drusilla's lip curl with scorn was yet big with a mighty hope—if Felix had only known!

Indeed, there is always such difference between the trembling God sends and other tremblings. God never scares in wantonness. He never frightens for the sake of frightening. If he sends us quaking, it is that he may drive us home, or to his arsenals.

Suppose that Edith Cavell had been granted the right which we fear she was denied? Suppose that Von Bissing had given her her day in court. Perhaps the best she could have done would have been to confess her guilt. At least, a certain human scruple would have been met. But God is never satisfied after that fashion. What he wants is not merely to see us get fair play; he wants to see us made over. And though we must pay, in suffering and tears, the uttermost farthing of our debt to the moral law, God is never satisfied if we miss the remaking of our souls. Opinion has been generally divided as to whether Becker's lawyers did well in restraining him from testifying in his own behalf. Guilty or innocent, he might have secured a different verdict. But very reverently I maintain that even such a result would have interested God little as compared with the redemption of Becker himself.

O, we have not yet entered into the heart of God! We want a man to have chance to declare himself *innocent,* for the sake of his family and friends. God wants him to

have opportunity to confess himself *guilty,* if must be, for the sake of his soul. I do not know that Paul would have enjoyed seeing Felix made over. Paul was a man; and sometimes it is pleasanter to let the damned *stay* damned. But we are talking of God. And when we talk of *him* we need to change our measures. Do you believe God thought a great deal of Paul and very little of Felix? How many lovable ones were in the apostolic company? Man, man alive, man whom God calls to eternal years, what were our hope if Jesus came to call the righteous, only, to repentance?

I have seen a mother shake her child until my heart went hot. "I'll teach you," she says. Teach him what? Teach him that she is stronger than he? And when he grows up he may adopt the code of certain European powers. God is different. Yes, I have seen him shake his disobedient child. That is the significance of Felix's trembling: God was shaking him, but not ruthlessly, only that Felix might turn from darkness to-day. When the flowers faded, and the wine soured on the lips of Lord Byron, what? Why, God

was trying to rebuild Byron. When Lord Wolsey saw the stars go out, and felt his heart grow cold in his breast, what? Retribution? Yes, if you please, but more than that: God seeking another chance with a broken man. When your ship comes not in, and your lights burn low, and

> A bolt is shot back somewhere in your breast,
> And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again;

depend upon it, God is trying to get at you in redemption.

But Felix! Just as his own soul began to sigh and sob in answer to the pleading of God, Felix adjourned the meeting. I wonder if he felt himself letting go.

Lord Peterborough, in the presence of Fénelon, confessed: "If I don't get out of this I shall become a Christian in spite of myself." It is very dangerous to live neighbor to God—I mean dangerous to your sins. You never can tell when he will get at you. Church is dangerous: good men and women are full of menace to you. And sunset bells, and evening star, and innocence in the faces of little children, and books, and hymns, and

all the rest. Felix is never entirely safe against the intrusion of God. God slipped in with Paul. And when things began to be uncomfortable in Felix's soul he adjourned the meeting. He said: "Go thy way for this time: when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." He thought he was saying it to *Paul*, but he said it to *God*.

IX

THE MAN WHO DROVE HARD

MEMORY has a curious law of fixation. In technical terms we call it the "law of association." But people who never opened a textbook on psychology, and would hesitate to spell the word, make use of the *law* every day of their lives. Thus, for example, I remember a certain parishioner as the man with the withered hand, and another by the thickness of his eyeglasses, and still another by his old-fashioned high boots. On the other hand, a certain well-known brand of soap sets my thoughts traveling to one of my classmates who persistently advertised its merits. In these years intervening he has done some fine writing, and has represented our nation in foreign capitals; but somehow I always associate him and this particular soap. One suggests the other. So when we want to fix a person in memory we note the peculiarity of his nose, or the twang of his

voice, or the hitch in his gait. Forgetting all else, we remember him by *that.*

Not essentially different is the working of the world's memory. Grant with the inevitable cigar stuck in his mouth, Landseer with a dog at his heels, Cleopatra holding the asp against her white breast are samples. Even the nicknames of history tell the same thing. We call one man William the Silent, another Charles the Bald, another Richard the Lion-Heart. The name Henry VIII suggests too many wives, and Henry III (of France) the dandy and collector of monkeys, and Cæsar unbounded ambition. We go so far as to personate certain virtues, and talk about the "patience of Job," or the "meekness of Moses" or the "courage of Daniel." To all men and all ages Shylock means greed, Hamlet indecision, Othello jealousy. Other qualities had they for which we might have given them our love. But with strange intuition the world has hit upon, and is pleased to remember them by, single outstanding traits.

So with Jehu, the man who drove hard. His name has become a proverb. To say of

a modern chauffeur that he "drives like Jehu" is to describe him well enough, and to warn pedestrians from the path of his machine. I do not know that fast driving was Jehu's redeeming virtue or besetting sin. Perhaps he never thought of himself in that role. But one day, as his chariot thundered up the highway, horses red nostriled, the driver hanging forward over their flanks, and in his wake a perfect storm of dust, the watchman called from his eyrie on the walls: "The driving is like the driving of Jehu . . . for he driveth furiously." I accept the likeness as correct. And I believe it furnishes clue to God's use of the man.

For God *did use* him—this man who drove hard. Sometimes God needs a man who drives hard. That is not to say God *admires* him. I do not find intimation that God "liked" him, merely the plain fact that God chose him and used him for a rough place in history, as he constantly finds work for instruments we call unlikely. What else will you make of Providence? Well enough for us to insist that Thomas Carlyle should also be a sort of parlor ornament; and that

Abraham Lincoln ought to have been more careful of his personal appearance; and that Thomas Edison might very properly keep back his venturesome hand from the ark of the covenant. When Paderewski first came to this country some people had his music spoiled for them by his absurdly long hair, just as you will find citizens who, in heat against certain characteristics of him, can hardly admit that Theodore Roosevelt ever did a fine thing. O, that we were half as quick to recognize the good in men as to pick upon their obvious limitations! Fortunately, God is different. He knows *how* to use, he is divine enough to be *willing* to use, "the stone which the builders rejected." Throughout the ages you find him doing it. This is the romance of Providence.

If Rembrandt had waited for a perfect brush and unfading pigments, we had gone without his famous "Night Watch" and his tender "Cowper Madonna." If Oliver Cromwell had been willing to use only full-fledged saints in his army, Charles's head might have stayed on his shoulders and tyranny stalked England for another hun-

dred years. If Jesus had declined to commit his gospel to narrow fishermen and reclaimed publicans, who would have forwarded to us the good news? And God? This is the wonder of God: that he "hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." God be thanked for his ability to take *any* man for what he is, and use him for all he is *worth,* even if at the end of the chapter the man himself disappears in a gust of tragedy and mists of tears.

Some day a man falls: a much-loved man, perhaps; mayhap a minister. For a day or a week the atmosphere has a fetid or acrid taste. Our breath catches somewhere, at mere sight of the fall, as when a workman drops from his perch on a scaffolding. At many a street corner foul-nosed dogs, scenting carrion, are snarling. Overhead the buzzards of reputation are screaming. And what is there to say? This, first: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he

fall." Not in the same dreadful way, but in *some* way or other. There are so many ways of falling that none can afford to plume himself on possession of a steady head. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault" —the Scripture does not name any limits— "ye which are spiritual, restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." That is the first thing to say—that there are many ways of falling.

And the second is this: that when a man falls he weakens the hold of his brethren everywhere. No man can sin to himself. We are members one of another. Whoever does wrong flings a firebrand into the camp of his friends. None drops out of his place in the line but to disturb the entire line. Are there not foes enough without having our friends betray us? O, if we could remember this: that our perfidy, our dishonesty, our uncleanness of life makes the weapon of every comrade turn soft in his hand! These men who airily assure you that it is nobody else's business what they do, what are they talking? The most arrant

nonsense, the most pestilent falsehood ever spoken. It *is* my business whether my brother walks worthily or not. It *is* equally his business what sort of work I make of my life. We are partners, he and I. God made us so. Neither of us has right to help defeat the other. Man—remember it—next time your blood runs hot and your pulses pound with evil: you may be tearing my house down about my head.

But there is yet one other thing to say when a man falls. And, sad to tell, we do not usually say it. Usually we say that when a man falls he unmakes his whole life, neutralizes it, denies his own good. It is not so. God knows the case is bad enough, but not so bad as that. No man is wholly corrupt—not even Nero, or Benvenuto Cellini, or Judas. And whatever good Nero has done, or Judas, becomes the property of the world; not even the doer of it can take it back. After Hugh Pentecost demitted the ministry and began his blasphemous career I heard it said that he had negatived all his earlier years. And when I heard I believed. *Now* I know better. A man

cannot revoke the good he has done. He may offset it; he may do more harm than ever he did good, but he cannot take back any unselfishness he has practiced, any truth he has lived—any more than he can call back and cancel his spoken words, or negative the experiences he has lived. I dare not say, even, that it were better if he had never been born. Jesus may say it: Jesus *did* say it, as concerning men who cause others to sin. *I* cannot say it. The books are not mine, but God's. And God has wonderful ways of using all sorts of agents in the establishment of his kingdom among men.

A friend of mine recently visited the huge powder mill at Hopewell. And he tells a depressing story of the workmen. Such hard faces, such riotous lives, such daily violence and horror, he says he never beheld before. Thousands of men living and fighting like beasts of the jungle—and not the sweetening presence of a woman among them—it seems incredible that they should be fit for any kind of work. Yet, lawless and profligate as they are, they *make good*

powder. Not all righteous criticism of their personal lives alters the fact that they are producing good powder, powder which, by the grace of God, shall help blast tyranny from its trenches and loosen the seats of the mighty. Would God that every man who lays a brick, or runs a train, or teaches a class, were a good man! To that we must come. But meantime let us be fair enough to recognize and accept *good work,* even when wrought by unhallowed and unclean hands. In the vast "mills of the gods" are all sorts of workmen—lewd and chaste, hard and tender, perverse and docile. And the God of all uses all of them, paying them wages, giving credit for every stroke of toil. In ways beyond their ken and ours, he gathers into the furtherance of that "purpose" which "through the ages runs," all their skill and pains. *My* God is big enough to do that. If yours isn't, how big is he?

O, but the man who drove hard—we have almost lost sight of him. God used Jehu. Up to now, and perhaps for ages to come, God has use for men who drive hard. See Attila, the Hun, sweeping down across the

lovely fields of Italy, *driving hard.* Neither pity nor reverence knew he. He was indeed a scourge. But was it accident or splendid insight that nicknamed him the "Scourge of God"? He *was* that. Who doubts to-day that God used him to help rouse Italy from hopeless sleep? And here is the modern war lord—called by some a second Attila—plowing a continent with the terrible wheels of his chariot, sowing the furrows with blood and tears, "driving furiously." I do not pretend to foresee the issue. Not mine to apportion the blame. This alone I am sure of: that when the smoke of conflict lifts, and the last cripple has limped home, we shall find that God used the war lord—perhaps by tearing him from his throne—to make earth a juster, fairer place for men to dwell.

Unitarians are fond of reminding us that we cannot measure their *influence* by the size of their denomination, as recorded in the religious census. They say that the leaven of their doctrine of God has worked in the mass of evangelic Christianity, and that we think more worthily of our Maker as result of their hard driving. Why not? God uses

apparent enemies, as well as manifest friends, to help him build his church. They drove furiously, did the leaders of Unitarianism. They rode down our feelings and our precious orthodoxies. But God, their Father and ours, was still on his throne, and I doubt not he used Channing and Theodore Parker, Emerson and Fuller, as he used Philistines and Syrians in training his children of old. The heretics of yesterday make more robust saints to-day.

Even Robert G. Ingersoll, with all his truculence and iconoclasm—of course God used him. God *had* to use him, and such as he, or relinquish claim to be God of all the earth. Doubtless the lectures of Ingersoll made skeptics of some. I used to feel the heart of me grow hot against his reckless driving among the sanctities of our most holy faith. He was so ruthless and brutal. He drove hard. But God did not resign even when Ingersoll lampooned him. And if the famous unbeliever made skeptics of some, he made sturdier Christians of others. Driving us in upon the splendid certitudes of the soul, he unintentionally helped us to a firmer grip

on God's hand. So, in all ages, is the rule of our God. *He* is not frightened at the false faces His children wear. With beautiful irony he makes even the wrath of man to praise him. And with a skill which only the future can reveal, he turns to the account of his Kingdom on earth, the furious driving of all earth's Jehus.

But this is what you see on *one* side of the shield. On the *other* side are the havoc and the heartache which Jehu works. See his arrow seek Joram. "And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot." With characteristic energy, Jehu drove hard. And the victim was his recreant king. But is it nothing that a man should die—even though he be a bad man? It hurts to die, even when one deserves it. Then, see Jehu looking up at Jezebel's window, and hear his terrible command: "Throw her down." And they obeyed, and her blood spattered his horses, and he spurned her with his foot. What a dreadful end to a cruel life! But Jezebel was a woman, and it is sweet to live.

O, the pain which Jehu gives while he drives hard!

Sitting in the quiet and security of the church, it is easy to philosophize over the blessings which will doubtless accrue to the world from this pitiless war. Thank God we *can* philosophize; otherwise we might go mad with pain. But who will give back to mothers their boys? And to sweethearts their lovers? And to children their "daddies"? Who will cancel out the unrecorded anguish of a thousand battlefields? Who will set flowing again, where God meant it to be, the torrents of blood? Ah, that is the price one part of the world pays for the furious driving of Jehu—that the rest of the world may be blessed. I am thinking of *that* just now. This rough driving age of ours—of course God is in it—but O, the slain! To be able to buy better shoes at lower prices than our fathers paid, to ride in faster trains than our grandsires dreamed of, to lay distant lands under tribute to provide luxuries for our tables and comfort for our homes—think what these privileges cost in blood and privation

for *others.* Think of the brothers who died stringing our electric wires, and the little sisters, wrecked in nerve, sitting at telephone switchboards while we save ourselves steps and time. This driving furious age, this age of efficiency raised to the n^{th} power—guess what its speed means to the victims.

And remember that Jehu himself is victim also, not *under* the chariot, but *in* it. The speed mania takes something from the soul of the driver, makes him callous and selfish. I wish there were time to ask how much the speed of the world has cost *you,* measured in terms of the soul. It takes time to be a friend, and to have one. It takes time to love music and books. It takes time to be holy. And Jehu seldom has "time." He must drive on—and on—and on—and always on. And to what? What shall it profit him if he win his race against time and competitors, and see always, in dreams, the faces of those he has crushed in his haste, and find *himself* out of a job when the driving is done? "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

We must leave Jehu. But not until we notice one thing more. Success in driving failed to make him a good man. The record says that "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord . . . for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin." He was a great driver, but when you have said *that* you have said all. His hands were clever, his body was stalwart, but his soul was sick. And the final reckoning is always in terms of soul.

X

THE MAN WHO GOT WHAT HE GAVE

If you were asked to name the greatest discovery of ancient or modern times, what would you say? Gravitation, or gunpowder, or electricity, or the circulation of the blood, or the germ theory of disease, or what? Somebody recently conducted an interesting questionnaire on the subject. But the list of answers did not even hint at the discovery I am about to name. The greatest discovery of the ages is the discovery that "every story has two sides." I wish we knew the discoverer's name, as we do that of Newton and Davy, Jenner and Pasteur. He is deserving of a taller monument than any of the others. Even though his discovery is not yet in general use, his anonymous fame ought to be secure.

Guess how different the world's history would be if men and women had remembered that "every story has two sides." There

would have been no Inquisition, no War of the Roses in England, no Civil Agony in our own republic, no Philippine dilemma. Nay, we should have been spared the most excuseless military convulsion of the ages. Merely the frankness to admit that every story has two sides, and that we ought to hear both before making up our minds and launching our projectiles—what a transformation this would work in our own streets and homes! Most of the powder of scorn is burned wastefully. Most of the broken friendships might have been saved. Most of the domestic altars would have been left inviolate. But, instead, we so fill our ears with the side we are telling or hearing that it rarely seems to occur to us that the other side of the story may be just as plausible, just as credible as ours. Some day, before the kingdom of heaven comes on earth—before it can be made to come—we shall eagerly admit that every story has two sides, and hear them both.

I mention the matter now for the sake of Haman—the man who got what he gave. And I mention it because one side of his

story is all the Bible gives. He has always been ranked with the damned. I never heard anybody say a good word for him. Yet I am sure there were good words to be said. God never made a man or woman who lacked redeeming traits. Nero had them, and the terrible Borgias, and Iago, and Shylock. So must Haman. And I cannot help wishing that we had his biography as penned by his most ardent friend. I should like to compare one with the other—the record of his apologist and the Bible narrative: just as we do with contrasting editorials on President Wilson. Nay, I should like to find the greatest common divisor of both equations.

In plain justice, then, to Haman, let me attempt to do that. And we shall find that both records agree upon this—the *romance of his rise.* He began small, as did John Wanamaker and Abraham Lincoln, Charles Lamb and Oliver Cromwell. He was not even native to the air of the court which honored him. From the ranks of a conquered tribe he climbed to a place just under the throne. He is an illustration of that romantic element which forever forbids us

to assign to men fixed grades. And I do not believe that even he could explain the romance of his rise. Now and again an enterprising editor persuades some famous man to share with the rest of mankind the secret of his power. Perhaps it is McClure himself, taking his magazine readers into his confidence. We read the story, every word, and understand the English—and end by knowing little more than at the beginning. You might as well hand a lexicon to a baby. Not the rising at a certain hour, not the division of one's time, not the amount of exercise or study, nor the abstention from tobacco—this is not really the secret. The solemn fact is that the secret of personal success is as untransferable as personality.

Hear Brutus' sneer by the body of his erstwhile friend:

> "Upon what meat hath this our Cæsar fed,
> That he hath grown so great?"

Deeper than the sneer is Brutus's wish that he knew the kind of meat which nourishes a career like Cæsar's. Nor could Cæsar tell, if the telling would save his life. Did you

ever hear one housewife telling another how to make a certain kind of cake? Merely a matter of so much sugar and flour, so much butter and eggs plus a pinch of that and this. And will observance of the rule guarantee the result? 'Tis the "knack," they say. It is not in the formula, nor in the ingredients. For, some old colored "mammy" can do what her highly cultivated mistress never understands in the kitchen.

Here is a famous canvas, say a Rembrandt or a Corot. What makes it? I defy you to learn from the critics. As hopefully scrape all the pigment from a canvas and, holding the desecrated elements in your vandal hand, say to the world, "This constitutes a painting." But it doesn't, as the most convinced Philistine knows. Dips of chrome yellow and dashes of carmine, with what more, yield no sunrise like Turner's, no faces like Rubens's, apart from the master's hand. Nor can the artist tell. He does not know. It is the romance of God's gift to him. Or here is a surgeon with a record of marvelous cures. Of course he will hold clinics. He will show the profession just how he does

the work. He will explain every step of the process. But how many of his auditors are likely to be able to do the same thing afterward? You cannot *tell* people great secrets like that. He would need to give them his hand, and even then they would blunder with it, apart from his eye and his judgment. His skill is his personal romance.

Or here is an evangelist, a specialist in winning men to Jesus Christ. When he talks, the thing he talks about seems the simplest as well as the most beautiful thing in the world. Anybody can do it. Thank God that anybody really can. But never by imitating somebody else. One of my friends was so impressed with Billy Sunday that he left the regular ministry in order to devote himself to evangelistic campaigns after the Billy Sunday pattern. I think he knows better now. He certainly ought to. Billy Sunday cannot tell any other man how to do it. If I thought he could, I should be sure that "Billy" is an impostor. How and why God honors his strange, wild ministry, Billy knows as well as you do—no better. That is the romance.

And so I come back to Haman. Not a line is here concerning the steps by which he mounted to power. Yet we know just as much as we could know after being *told.* Call him a grafter or a sycophant or any hard name you will, and you have not gotten far with your explanation. The rise of a man is as mysterious as the upward pull of his toy balloon in a child's hand, or the movement of the cream in his glass. As well account for Grant by the inevitable cigar in his mouth, or Paderewski by the length of his hair. When God does a great thing for you, you will never be able to *explain* it. A fortune or a friend, a great love or the soul of a neighbor won to your Lord—you will never be able to *say* how you won it. God does not mean that you should. It is his secret and yours. Talk would cheapen it. Keep the doors closed and the curtains drawn, as the Hebrews did upon the ark of the covenant.

This is the first item upon which Haman's warmest admirer and his biblical critic would easily agree: the romance of his rise. And the second is this: his love of popularity.

Some folks do not seem to care—though I never quite believe them when they say so—what other people think about them. As a matter of fact, we *ought* to care. Haman did—very much, too much, in a way. In particular, he enjoyed being bowed to. As he went in and out at the king's gate everybody bowed to him. And his soul grew warm with pride. If Mordecai had done what the others did, my story had had a different ending. But speaking of bows brings back a quaint custom of the Yale of my day. I do not know if the custom has gone with the old fence and many another tradition. But as the president walked down the broad center aisle of the chapel, after prayers, each weekday morning, the student body waited, facing the aisle. Thus as he passed we bowed, each pew as he passed, a very profound if somewhat perfunctory bow, bending our bodies at the waist. Viewed from the gallery, it made a most amusing spectacle. And I have often seen a smile on old Prexy's face. Yet everybody loves to be bowed to. We spend a fair portion of our strength acquiring positions which make

it incumbent upon others to bow to us. And the sweetest reward is to watch them bend the knee. I have sometimes fancied that the Pope must grow very weary of kisses bestowed upon the sacred toe. But most of us can stand a good deal of that sort of homage. We love to be bowed to.

Quite recently Congress created the rank of admiral, and we Americans were called upon to rejoice. The papers said so, eloquently. But why rejoice? Not because certain naval commanders, thus honored, became thereby better sea-dogs, not because our rating as a sea power was enhanced. Simply because, on occasions of state, in foreign countries, our naval officers could stand further up in the line. It had been so humiliating for them to walk behind men not really higher in authority than themselves. And it was doubtless essential to a maintenance of the proper dignity of these United States that our own naval representatives assert their full grade! *Doubtless.* But I am not a competent authority in such matters of finesse. I merely know how ardently we love the front ranks, and the

proper obeisance of the crowd. We can understand Haman.

By contrast I remind you of one of the stories they tell of Lincoln. It may be apocryphal, but it is good enough to be true. He was walking with a friend when a humble pedestrian appeared in the path ahead. Of course it was the other's place to turn out for the President. But as the other showed no disposition so to do, Mr. Lincoln quietly stepped aside and let the other pass. And when his friend asked why a President should do such an ignominious thing, Lincoln looked as innocent as a baby and replied, "Why, if I hadn't turned out of the way there might have been a collision." O, great souled man! No wonder they call you great. Not in regalia, nor in court etiquette, nor in hair-splitting diplomacy, but great in sheer height of manhood, great in the girth of soul. When a man is as big as Lincoln was he does not need to be bowed to. He can afford to give way.

For that is the genius of Christianity. Somebody says that the difference between ordinary socialism and true Christianity is

this: "Socialism says, 'I am as good as you are.' Christianity says, 'You are as good as I am.'" Much of the world's bitterness is the result of our trying to prove that we are as good as our neighbor. How about trying the other way? You never find our Lord worrying about the deference due him. His disciples did the worrying. Stooping never seemed to shorten his stature. Without conscious loss of dignity he could wash his friends' feet. He was so serenely sure of himself.

Just here, I believe, was the root of Haman's rage against Mordecai. If Haman had been sure of himself, what need he care whether or not Mordecai bowed? Haman might even have gone so far as to be sorry for the other—as Jesus was for the men who crucified him. What matter, one bow more or less? But Mordecai's behavior was as salt in a wound. It reminded Haman of something he wanted to forget—how unworthy and insincere he was. Haman was inflated and knew it, and Mordecai pricked him. Even Haman's best friend would have admitted that, I think. Mordecai's failure

to bow told Haman how *unworthy* he was of the bows of the *others*. Hence his rage.

At least it is so with us. Our sensitiveness is a symptom of our unsoundness. None are so quick to resent criticism as those to whom the criticism applies, none so keen to defend their dignity as those whose dignity needs most defense, none so fierce in their outcry against a slight or a snub as those who realize the hollowness of their own pretensions. A man whose fortune is invested in good real estate does not need to go white over the news of the stock-ticker. And a soul that stands four-square to the world can bear some pretty strong winds without feeling unsettled. To be called a thief does not hurt the honest man nearly so much as it hurts the thief. Jesus never seemed to feel called upon to defend himself. He held his shining way, as we, in proportion to our integrity, can afford to do. He did not even grow hot when people called him a "glutton and a wine-bibber." He *knew*. And the world knows to-day.

But my story hastens. Once Haman got his attention fixed upon his poor, injured

dignity, he could not enjoy anything. He woke in the morning thinking about it. He fell asleep thinking of it and dreamed horribly of Mordecai. When his friends reminded him of his many honors, Haman sourly admitted, "All this availeth me nothing so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate." You know how it usually is when a man has rheumatism. That is the all absorbing theme. All paths of conversation lead to it. Let the talk fall upon the weather, and he remembers that his rheumatism is always worse in certain kinds of weather. Tell him that a neighbor is afflicted with boils or grippe, and he sees occasion to remind you how much more serious rheumatism is. Talk of golf, and he sadly remembers how he used to play before the rheumatism came. Spread him a banquet, and forsooth he cannot enjoy it, on account of his rheumatism. Talk of heaven, and the best thing he can say of it is that the inhabitants don't have rheumatism.

So with Haman. So with us in our grouches and chagrins. Life swings in a pitifully small circle, and we always come

back to the same point. Everything accentuates our hurt. It is like a sore thumb, always being struck. Isn't it pathetic how one moderate-sized injury to our feelings can fill the sky, blotting out the glow of sunrise and constellations? A certain parricide said he could not bear to hear the birds sing: their twittering always seemed reproaching him for the murder of his father. Poor little birds, they did not mean any such thing. The thing was in the wretched man's soul. But it is easier to kill the birds than the thing in the soul. So the plot thickened. Mordecai must die. Everything else seemed to help on the plan. The wife's counsel, an invitation to the queen's banquet, the king's strange question—everything related itself to Mordecai and revenge. Even the gallows were built in advance—high enough so that the world could see how sorely Haman had been hurt.

Just a moment while the scene shifts. Yes, there is a figure dangling from the gallows Haman built. But the figure is not that of the hateful Jew: it is Haman's, "hoist by his own petard." He got what he gave.

This is part of the solemnity of life. We are constantly swallowing the poison prepared for others. Suspicion, flung out into God's world, tumbles back upon our own heads. Jealousy spawns quickly, and its young attack our own vitals. You cannot sow distrust and not reap it, or unkindness and not gather, or pride and not fall. A wonderful world is this in which the voice which life gives us back is the echo of our own.

XI

THE MAN WHO DISLIKED THE PRESCRIPTION

So eminent an authority as Whittier undertakes to name for us the saddest four words in language:

> Of all sad words of tongue or pen,
> The saddest are these, "It might have been."

Pardon me if I suggest that the Quaker poet might have boiled his four words down to one. Such a process might not have suited his meter, but the result would have fitted the facts. And the single word which Whittier might have substituted for four is the tiny word "if." Sad little tear-stained monosyllable, spotted with blood, and bursting with bitter regrets. When his staff reminded him that an "if" was in the way, Napoleon replied that he would remove the "if." To take the "ifs" out of life would kill huge part of its pain. "*If* I had only known," moaned Carlyle at the graveside of

his patient Jane. "Lord," said Martha, "*if* thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Or Edwin Booth, yearning for his dead Mary: "*If* Mary should come to me, I feel that my soul would no longer have doubts." O, the pitiful "ifs" which start us sweating in the night, and streak the heavens by day with fire! If, if, if! Live your life over and omit the "ifs"—perhaps you would ask no diviner privilege. You might have been rich, or honored, or useful, or good, or merely happy, *if!*

But my talk to-night is not upon a tiny word of two letters. It concerns itself with a slightly longer word which divides with the former the heartaches and bitterness of men. "But" is its name. If I were called upon to designate the saddest two words of tongue or pen, I think I should select these: "if" and "but." And I am not sure that the second pales greatly by comparison with the first. Take out the "ifs" and the "buts," and ours would be a very different world. Few of us would want to leave it for heaven. "But"—O sinister, dwarfing, hateful word: let me build my story around it.

"Naaman . . . was a great man . . .; he also was a mighty man in valor, *but.*" You know something dismal is coming before I complete the sentence. That is precisely the way we damn men and things. We start with a compliment and we end with a curse. We tell how good our neighbor is, *"but."* We have no doubts about the security of a certain bank, *"but."* We were in a fair way to enjoy ourselves, *"but."* How familiar it sounds! And the word has noble uses, also. Many a dark sky has been cleared, many a bruised reputation saved by a timely and cheering use of the small adversative. I am thinking just now, however, of its sinister service—how it pulls down and tramples. "Naaman was a great man with his master, and honorable, . . . and a mighty man in valor, *but.*" Now, mind what this particular complaint was. Had it not been leprosy, it might have been lameness, or jealousy, or unrequited love, or unbelief, or anything else you can think of. The tragedy is that we cannot complete the sentence without stabbing it near the heart.

Lord Byron had a wonderful gift, *but* he

had also a club foot. John Wesley might have been happy as well as great in service, *but* he married the wrong woman. George Eliot had left a fairer fame *but* for Colonel Lewes. William of Orange wrote his name big in history, *but* he stained it by his unchaste life. England cannot forget her Nelson, *but* she wishes he had been as clean as he was brave. Luther did a work of incalculable value, *but* his temper went partly untamed. Paul had honors enough from God to crowd his soul, *but* there was also the thorn, and the memory of Stephen's murder. Jesus came from God and went to God, *but* he came by the way of a manger, and went by the way of the cross. Always the grim adversative—*"but," "but," "but."*

And nowise different with us. No ointment without the intruding fly. No sky lacking fleck or threat of cloud. No heart without its personal burden. I do not pause to ask how it came to be so. I content myself with observing that so it is—and that if we could read men as God does we should find no exceptions. Sometimes I find myself searching the eyes of people. I am trying

to read their hearts. No, I am not curious. Their secrets are their own. I am merely wondering what loads they are carrying alone, and far from sight. Into our home there used to come a rare soul. He was sunshine and smiles and strength. He always left a blessing about the premises. He seemed an exception to the rule we are thinking of. Then the bitter truth came out. All the smiling years he had been hiding a father's shame for a dissolute son. And as I remember the honors and affection life piled upon that father I wonder how big they all bulked when he thought of his boy.

In one of the saddest letters ever penned, David Gray, the young English poet, cries across the Channel to his father, "Father, I have come through things that would make your heart break if you could know, things I shall never tell except to God." The poor home-sick lad longed to come home to die, in his own little room, as he said. And would he tell his father as well as God? O, the pathetic haste with which we shut the closet where the skeleton is when company comes!

O, the pitiful deceits we practice upon the world. Enough that God knows! "Be pitiful," wrote Ian Maclaren, in an album, upon the occasion of his last visit to America: "you do not know what the other man is bearing."

Ah, Naaman, we are brothers of thine. We have not leprosy, but we have something to dim the blue of our sky, and poison the wells of our joy. We have money enough, and friends, and good health, *but*. Always the grim little adversative!

But, God be thanked, that is not the whole of the story, either for Naaman or for us. Else I ought to be ashamed to bring it here. *This* is the *house* of *hope*. And, as Naaman found, even leprosy is not incurable. There are plenty of people already registered as stand-patters with misery. Out on a poultry farm, known to some of you, they showed me an inveterate "setting hen." "Setting" is her specialty. She always wants to "set." Spring, summer, wet or dry—any time is a good time for hatching. And any sort of egg—duck egg, unfertilized egg, addled egg —is entitled to be sat on for the full term,

and something to spare. Wise-eyed, sad, persistent, protesting, half nourished because she cannot find time to eat, she reminds me of some people I have met; not all belonging to her own sex. You can scarcely drive them off the nests in which their afflictions lie. Beat them up with a broom handle, and back they come, gasping and ruffled, as if their precious eggs might have grown cold during their absence.

Let me lift a protesting voice. There are burdens that do not need to be borne—any longer. There are sorrows whose death is long overdue. There are sores that would heal if we gave them a chance. At least it is fair neither to God nor ourselves to spend any time brooding. The very best one can hope to hatch from an old grief is a new heartache. Maybe Naaman will catch something else as soon as he gets rid of his leprosy. Maybe the fire will prove hotter than the frying pan. But no child of the Eternal is justified in frying in the fat of his sorrow when there is any honorable way out. Take a chance on the fire, once and again. "Go bury thy sorrow," even though some new

trial springs from its grave. "Hope in God, . . . who is the health of my countenance, and *my* God."

Look at Naaman again. Just when that intrepid warrior's day seemed darkest, and life not worth while, God was preparing to take the hateful "but" away. Would you believe it, God is always doing that sort of beautiful thing? He hates to see his children go sad and sore, worse than you hate to see street urchins go barefoot in winter. Doctors admit that perhaps ninety per cent of sick folks would get well anyhow if all practitioners were banished. But that is because God, who was in the healing business before the first medical school was opened, is always "on the job." And he knows how to do a greater thing with a broken heart than with a broken arm.

So the hint came to Naaman, the leper. At first it was merely a hint. And if Naaman had been as obtuse as we usually are when God is giving us hints, Naaman would have missed his cure. Suppose you were sick, and the waitress told your wife that she knew a doctor who could cure you, and your wife

ventured to tell you. Well, to quote Scripture, likely there would have been "silence in heaven for about one hour," if there had been nothing worse. The impertinence, the presumption, the effrontery—till you wearied trying to find adjectives to express your disgust! As if you needed to be advised by an underling where to look for a cure! Precisely that happened in Naaman's household. His wife had a captive serving maid, whose heart cried back home, and who had seen the telltale spot on the master's face, and remembered Elisha's name. And she had the hardihood to tell her mistress that the man of the house might get well if he had the right doctor. And the mistress of the house was just credulous enough to give the matter second thought and tell her husband. And Naaman was so discouraged that he was willing to try anything or anybody for the sake of being rid of his plague.

Whereas we? Well, I greatly dislike to admit how stupid we are when God tries to give us hints. We need to be knocked over and beaten up before it seems to occur to us that God is trying to show us the way home.

Any sort of a clue is good enough for the man who has lost his way in the woods. The difference in the bark on the north side of trees, the track of a foot in the brush, the furtive gleam of a light in the distance—any clue is worth following, for the lost traveler. Any kind of hint suffices to challenge the interest of an alert mechanic or inventor. A bit of steel, accidentally split in the hand of Joseph Gillott while working at his trade, gave the world its steel pen. Sight of the wasted drop of solder in the old-fashioned tin can factory set a workman thinking, and issued in a device which saves thousands of dollars in every such plant. An unintended scratch on glass suggested etching and its beautiful uses. Indeed, it may be said that many of the most important inventions in common use represent the partial "harvest of a quiet eye." Any hopeful lead sets the chemist wide awake. Who shall estimate the patience of that quest which ended with the identification of the typhoid germ, or the bacillus of diphtheria? A thousand failures, and a thousand and one attempts. As Napoleon said after his disas-

trous defeat at Marengo, "The battle is lost, but there is yet time to win another." You cannot defeat that spirit, whether on a battlefield or in a laboratory. And, some day, following the lead of the gentlest chemical or microscopical hint, somebody will trail to its lair the foul secret of cancer.

Yes, hints are enough except for our stupid hearts. Somebody tells of a village booby who was constantly getting in the way. One day he wandered into a village store and, after teetering around for a time, was thrust out upon the sidewalk. Nothing daunted, he soon reappeared at the counter, and was again ejected, this time still more roughly. But he had the persistence of blind souls, and a third time he entered the store. For this latest offense he was fairly flung in a heap near the curb. Then the light broke. For, as he gathered himself together, ruefully flecking the dust from his clothing, he said with somewhat belated conviction: "I've kinder got it into my head they don't want me in there."

O, the hard falls we should save ourselves, and the heart aches we should escape, if we

were quicker to take God's hints! I believe the human spirit is immeasurably more sensitive than any barometer. It registers the approach of a thousand storms. It hints where the sunshine is. It is constantly bringing us signals of danger or prophecies of spring skies. And you may depend upon it more confidently than upon the readings of the most delicate barometer ever built. Do you recall the bitter wonder of Jeremiah over his countrymen's obtuseness?—"The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times . . . and the swallow observeth the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord."

But we have not yet noticed the most familiar part of the story. Naaman came near to missing his cure. Taking the hint of the small messenger in his home, he did not enjoy what he found. Like most of us, he loved the theatrical, the spectacular, the august. If he was going to be healed of his leprosy, he insisted upon being healed in dramatic fashion. He expected Elisha to pose, and to recite his divine credentials, and to make mysterious motions. As he con-

fessed afterward: "Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." That is what he was *expecting*. And when, instead of meeting that feverish expectation, Elisha sent a messenger telling Naaman to dip himself seven times in a modest river, Naaman did just what we probably should have done. "He turned and went away in a rage." Were there not in his own country rivers big enough to swallow the muddy Jordan, and still not overflow their banks? Poor, unreasonable Naaman! But for the simple good sense of his servants he had missed his great chance with God.

How hotly we protest against God's unostentatious ways. Most of his healings are as simple as sunlight and smiles—and we wish they were different. I recall a woman who consulted an oculist. She was sure she needed glasses. She had her mind quite made up to them. And I think she would have been best pleased at a prescription for the most expensive lenses. But the physician

quietly said: "Madam, you do not need glasses. All you need is to rest your eyes occasionally. Lift them from your book or needle to the trees or the hills." Most of us would resent such a simple prescription. The idea of paying money for that sort of advice!

But that is a fair sample of the healing ways of the Father. Here is a broken heart. As one reminded me: "Remember that there is always in the congregation somebody with a broken heart." There are such here. And if I should suggest that God's best way to heal a broken heart is by plenty of work and outgoes of kindness, would you relish the prescription? Some of you would rather pay for a surgical operation, or make a pilgrimage to Mecca. I read with interest some weeks ago how George Inness tried "to break into the church." He was looking for a man's job. And he said that no preacher could suggest one. Shall I dare intimate that *he* was quite half to blame? He wanted a dramatic task—something unusual and startling. And he might have found, any day, at his elbow in the office, or on the street, precisely the sort of task by the doing

of which Jesus expects his kingdom to come. No need to *hunt* for work so long as there is among your employees or fellows or children one who does not know your Lord.

So with the healing of the soul itself. Billy Sunday comes to town. And what more can Billy Sunday do than to show men and women the old simple door to the Father's house? He will call them to "hit the trail." He invites them to come forward and take his hand. He sees that their names are taken. But when all the externals, of trombone and chorus and enthusiasm, are taken away, the residue is the simple, sweet prescription against which so many protest because it is simple. To the first disciples and to the latest, Jesus says the same thing: "Follow me." That is the whole command. But all light and love and heaven are in obedience to that simple, inclusive word.

Naaman recovered his senses before his opportunity had passed. He was willing, for once, to try the simple way. "Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, . . . and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child."

XII

THE MAN WHO GOT HIS PRICE

EVERY painted likeness must be viewed from its proper angle. It will not suffice that we "look" at a canvas, however absorbingly. Most of us are easy victims of an ancient fallacy—that seeing involves merely the use of our eyes. And, for that matter, we need never hope to see *all* that the artist sees. But there is always a vantage point from which we may most intelligently study a canvas. I learned this lesson afresh in a studio recently. I was admiring the artist's skill. I might have insisted that I was using my eyes, both of them. But the artist called, "Here—you must stand here!"

So I feel with respect to our study of Judas, the man who got his price. No particular credit to ourselves, or to him, that his features are familiar to all of us. Indeed, they are painfully familiar. His portrait hangs in an uncomfortably conspicuous

place, rivaling Peter's and John's. Sometimes it seems that we cannot get out of range of it. We shudder, and yet look again, as at an evil eye, or at some poor, mangled body in the street. O, Judas, it would be hell enough merely to know what the world thinks of you. But even the likeness of the betrayer deserves to be viewed from the proper angle. And I believe we find that angle here. "He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and . . . went and hanged himself." That is not simply the closing page of the tragedy: it throws its uncanny light upon the whole story leading thereto. Knowing what Judas did after the poison of treason began to work upon his Master, we know a great deal that we must otherwise have missed knowing about him. Did you ever study his portrait from the site of his gallows? I do not ask you to forgive him—though I am sure his Master did. All I ask is that you look at him from the angle of his terrible self-vengeance.

And the first thing to see is altogether obvious—so obvious that you can see it from *any* angle. He was a full member of the

twelve. For the greater part of three years he went in and out with Peter and Thomas and John—and without hint of disparagement. Remember that the Gospels were written *after* the tragedy; and that the evangelists would have been more than human if they had not tried to trace the trail of the serpent down the entire path of Judas's discipleship. I wonder if such a method is ever fair? To seize upon a brother's evil deed and use it as a sponge to wipe out the record of his good! Benedict Arnold was not always a traitor: he was a loyal soldier for many years. Abelard is entitled to be remembered for many acts besides the havoc he wrought in his own soul when his path crossed Eloise's. It is said that the monster of cruelty, Caligula, was a mild-mannered, well-disposed boy. You couldn't deny Peter's skill as a fisherman, or the lovableness of his nature, even to account for his cowardice. And so I believe that the full story of Judas's life would furnish many a beautiful lesson. I wish we had his portrait painted by Jesus Christ.

"Papa tells God all the naughty things I do," complained a youngster, "but he never says a word about the times I try to be good." What prompt confessors of other people's faults are we!—so keen to detect a neighbor's departure from the perpendicular in conduct, so ruinously alive to another's mistake. I wonder if the psalmist was thinking of the contrast when he cried into the face of God: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, who shall stand?" Sometimes God could afford to forget: *we* are so certain to *remember*. Have you read the poetized story of Rizpah —Rizpah watching the bodies of her dead boys, beating off with her naked hands the hovering vultures? She would have done even more for their good names. Try to lisp some evil against them, if you dare. She would tear you to shreds. And did you ever fight like that for the good name of people, driving off the unclean birds of scandal? Or have you played vulture?

In so far as the familiar cynicism of Mark Antony is true at all,

> The evil that men do lives after them,
> The good is oft interred with their bones,

it is because we play the part of grave-diggers. God did not so intend. He gave to goodness an immortality he bestows not upon evil. In the long record of the millenniums even "the memory of the wicked shall rot." But meantime we are so careful to keep it alive. Poor Judas! Nobody really knows how he looked. We have none but portraits done by artists who learned to despise him. I am sure that Jesus who dismissed him to his appointment so gently, on the night of the betrayal, would have found somewhat kind to say.

I remember a girl who had been piteously marked from birth. You could scarcely keep your eyes from her face, it was so disfigured. Often I wondered how she could smile at all. She must have known: God forgive the mirrors the pain they cause. But one day her mother said to me, "Did you notice how beautiful one side of Hattie's face is?" No, I had not noticed. I was obsessed with the birthmark. It had never occurred to me that I ought to look for beauty in such a face. Yet the beauty was there. And from that day to this, with that mother's pleading

admonition in my ears, I have failed not to look for the few beautiful inches in the woman's face. But I had to be jolted out of our usual way. Usually a good-sized wart or wen suffices to distract attention from an otherwise lovely face. God is so different. As the record says: "His eye beholdeth every perfect thing." That is the kind he stresses. He would rather behold the beauty than the blemish. And he lives to help us discover our own good.

But the case for Judas does not rest entirely upon surmise. He was treasurer for the twelve. As John says, with a sneer, Judas "had the bag." I wish John had omitted the sneer, for there is no intimation that Judas fell below the standard of careful banker. There are born financiers, people who love to handle money as the artist loves his brush, and the musician his instrument. And you can trust them, not with your good name perhaps, or your wife, but with your money. They are as safe as the Bank of England. I assume that Judas was that sort of man. He gravitated into the office of treasurer as naturally as water runs down

hill. He held it until the dreadful night of the betrayal, for even John admits that when Judas left the table that blackest night they supposed he had gone out to purchase supplies, or to distribute money among the poor. Yes, Judas was treasurer, and a good one too—better than Peter would have been. I do not think that his comrades would ever have dreamed of electing Peter to the position. In an impetuous moment Peter might have emptied the bag upon some outcast, or to provide a banquet for his Lord. Fancy, too, what might have happened to the treasury while Peter was making his various excursions upon the water. No, not Peter. Judas was the man.

I wonder if the tragedy began there. It is so hard for people with different gifts to understand each other. One day my attention was called to a mixed brood down by the pond—chickens and ducks, recently hatched in the same nest by an unsuspecting mother. Up to that moment they had been good friends. Differences in shape of feet and in gait had been accepted. They had eaten from the same pan, and nestled under the

same warm feathers. But at the margin of the pond they separated—like Baptists and Methodists—and life was different afterward. Neither section of the brood could understand the other. That which each could do best, neither wished the other to do. Henceforward they traveled in separate companies.

They were almost human in behavior. Many of the most racking bitternesses of life spring from the utter inability of sincere people to understand people equally sincere. Often we can get on with frank sinners more comfortably than with saints who worship after a different fashion. The kind of hymns we enjoy is doubtless the only kind to sing. The phrases in which we pour out our souls are the pregnant phrases from which all soul-cries must be born. The path we tread is the only one that leads surely to the Gate.

Judas the practical. You may be sure he was that, whether or not he had ever been elected treasurer. Judas never could understand the high flights of the soul. He was deadly afraid of extravagance. Remember

his outcry against Mary's passionate gift. The idea of wasting so much money in spikenard, even upon the dear feet of his Lord! Judas almost choked: "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" Poor Judas, he put a price upon the priceless. But I have never quite forgiven John for his cruel comment. If he made it, at the time, to Judas, I can see the iron cut into Judas's soul. For, here is what John says concerning Judas's purblind speech: "This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the bag." Ah, John, you have no right to say that! I do not think you would ever have been moved to say it but for the later conduct of Judas. It is a dreadful thing to smudge a man's soul with the black of some subsequent act.

Boys flying kites haul in those white-winged birds:
You can't do that when you are flying words.
The ugly word, unspoken, falls back dead,
But God himself can't kill it when 'tis said.

Personally I do not so believe. I believe that Judas felt as we sometimes do when we see vast sums of money spent upon cathe-

drals and monuments and mortuary flowers. As I have watched great mounds of costliest blooms piled up in cemetery plots, to be blackened by frost over night, and never to sweeten with one beautiful breath the sleep of the sleeper beneath, I have said in my heart a thing similar to Judas's criticism of Mary's spikenard: "Why were not these glorious blossoms left in the greenhouses and their price spent in shoes and bread?" But who am I to interfere with the great outbursts of the heart? The world is big enough to hold both kinds—God needs both kinds—John the dreamer and Judas the practical.

Of the most remarkable orator who ever stood in a Baltimore pulpit it used to be said that he was fortunate to find ten cents in his pocket at any time. His salary was spent before it became due, or was given away to the first claimant for aid. And I suppose you would have clipped his glorious wings if you had been able to teach him economy. Soaring into the heavens, and with pocket presumably empty! But that is not the worst of it—that his pocket lacked a convenient dime: the worst is that some people

alleged his impecuniosity against his preaching. And possibly he pitted his preaching against their prudence. And so you have it again—hare and tortoise disputing relative values. When, I wonder, shall we grow big enough to admit that God needs a variety of children, and loves them all, and has work for all?

But Judas the practical becomes Judas the disappointed—and God only knows the hideous shapes that break out of the soul's defeats. Looking at Judas, looking pitifully from his gallows-side, I am sure that Judas was doomed to disappointment. There are people so practical that they need to see everything set down in plain figures. Reading the internal revenue statistics concerning the consumption of liquor in the United States, they feel convinced that statutory prohibition is a failure. Taking cue from the war, they argue the collapse of Christianity. When Billy Sunday closes a particular campaign they will estimate, in terms of church membership, the net results of his stay. No hint of the dreams that have broken into sordid lives, no glimpse of the

remade vows and rebuilt domestic altars, no reckoning of the inward, unadvertised spiritual triumphs—only dry-as-dust figures! They are Missourians clamoring to be "shown," and they will be "shown" in one fashion only.

I think of Judas as that sort of man. And, being that sort of man, he was certain to be disappointed in Jesus. Judas wanted to see things happen. He was strong on "efficiency." He liked to see the dust fly. Vacuum-cleaner methods never would have appealed to him. He wanted the Kingdom to come with a rush. I am sure that he enjoyed the way Jesus drove the traders from the temple. That was Judas's conception of progress. But the quiet building of hope in a human soul, the forgiving of a preposterous Peter, and the negation of all advertising methods, made Judas writhe.

The most interesting defense of Judas I have ever seen is by a lawyer who, later, took Judas's terrible leap in the dark. He says that Judas was the most daring believer of the twelve. Judas had so much faith that he was willing to put his Master to the test.

All the work needed was a supreme issue. Let him put Jesus into a position where Jesus must assert his power, and the results would be quick and dramatic. Hence, when Judas covenanted with the priests he was really celebrating his own surpassing, if raw, faith.

But the thirty pieces of silver—have I forgotten them? No, I have not forgotten them. I see them in the hand of Judas, clinking drearily. I see him count them over one by one—with a strange light in his face! (Was it greed or hope or dismay?) And then I see them again on the floor of the temple where Judas flung them in hopeless agony. One, two, three—no, the sum is not great enough to explain the tragedy in the usual terms. If Judas had been money-mad he might have had three hundred or three thousand instead of thirty pieces. Some one suggests that they were intended to bind the bargain, merely, while Judas gave his Lord a chance to vindicate himself. We do not know. The secret was buried at the foot of Judas's gallows. Something evidently went wrong with the plan, or there

would have been no gallows victim. I do not know just how far Judas *meant* to go when he covenanted with the priests. Judas himself never knew how far he had gone. He plunged out into the dark before the worst happened to his Lord. Something went wrong, I say. But whatever Judas *intended,* there is no doubt as to what he achieved.

Motive is much, but motive is not all. The nurse who gave her patient the wrong medicine had a good motive, but the patient's life paid forfeit. A friend of mine who shot his own son while hunting was clean hearted, but he had killed his boy. John Wilkes Booth thought he was doing right when he crept into the box behind Lincoln and let go that fateful bullet, but the bullet did the work. We cannot hope to be saved for our *motives.* Even God must deal also with results. When Judas saw what he had done he could find no retribution dreadful enough to express his shame. Whatever his sin, he had conscience left. "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and . . . hanged himself."

For betraying his Lord. That is how he described his act. "I have betrayed the innocent blood." To do that is easier than we usually admit. There are so many fashions of betraying Christ. We may be guilty of it while we are telling the world how much we adore him. Lately there have been some interesting discussions as to the right of a belligerent vessel to hoist an enemy-country's flag. I leave the question to the proper authorities for settlement. But to raise the flag of Jesus Christ over any craft not engaged in his business is betrayal. To commit him to hasty campaigns is betrayal of him as truly as disloyalty or secret treason. To make any sort of terms, however disingenuous, with his foes is betrayal of him. To hear him defamed and not to shout for him, to play fast and loose with his requirements, to give him our lips instead of our lives, is betrayal. That piteous gallows with its broken form—what a warning it speaks! O, the tragedy of learning too late what we might have known before!

XIII

THE MAN WHO STARTED WRONG

Among the curious souvenirs of the Orient brought me as a boy by a traveler was one which interested me strangely. It was an ancient tear-bottle, similar to those probably used by the hired mourners in the story of Jairus's daughter. It was an emblem of grief, as truly as the modern mourning-band or crepe-veil. To us the suggestion of holding a receptacle to one's eyes to catch the tears is almost ludicrous. And, doubtless, the ancient tear-bottle stood for as many insincere tears as certain of our formal observances do. But I am thinking now of the curious tear-bottle as belonging to the threnody of the ages. Not of crocodile tears, as we call them, but of the salt of the soul, was the psalmist singing when he cried up into the face of God: "Put thou my tears into thy bottle." O, the heart-

breaks, as anguished as yours or mine, whose brine was caught by the tear-bottle! O, the stories of human sorrow that could be told, perhaps, by my curio from the East!

I speak of it now, however, only to bring before you one of the most moving fragments of Scripture. It is a sort of tear-bottle which holds, still undried, the outbreak of a father's sorrow. "O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The literature of sorrow has nothing more pitiful, more poignant than that. Put it beside the drenchings and upheavings of ordinary fiction, and they look foolish. Not a word to spare—just a saturate solution of grief. If I could read out of the familiar words a small fraction of the anguish David put into them there would not be a dry eye in the house. And if we could sound the words to the deeps of them, if we could analyze, by some subtle process, the brine of this precious tear-bottle, we should know the whole tragedy of Absalom's life.

For my subject is not David but the son who broke David's heart. And while every-

body knows *something* about him, the record, as usual, is disappointingly meager. Not from histories and biographies, at their best, do you get the full human story: you must examine the tears in the bottle. Dashing, brilliant, violent figure is Absalom. He was likable, as his father, but without the father's loyalty. He had David's courage, but not David's conviction. He could "wait" as David, but not upon the Lord. He had David's passionateness but not his penitence. He left a track of light, but it was lurid. He lived intensely, and fought bitterly, and died foolishly. I want to study him with you, now: this man who started wrong.

I say "started wrong." Maybe I ought to say *was* started wrong. Sometimes I wonder how many of the world's transgressors had a fair start. I mean, before they were born, for we *really* "start" decades, if not centuries, before the birth record is made. One of the first questions asked concerning the new arrival is, "Whom is he like?" or "Whom does she resemble?" We seem to take for granted that originality of appearance or manner is hardly to be looked

for. And we curiously wonder just what part of his physical inheritance the child has borrowed. One recalls Richelieu taking in his arms the new-born Louis and carrying him to the window in order to search the child's features more closely. And history is pleased to record what he said. Ah, but what did the Premier care whom the boy "favored" except as furnishing clue to the mold of his soul? Shrewd, unscrupulous statesman, he was far too wise to hope to build things *into* the soul of the child; he was wondering which part of its inheritance he could *bring out* to serve his own ends and yield glory to France.

This indeed is education—both in the good and in the sinister meaning of the word. According to a primary law of science, you cannot *take out,* whether from a crucible or a soul, that which was not *already in.* Education means the bringing out of the lawyer or the preacher, the Shylock or the wanton that was in the child by inheritance. I do not think that you can ever do much more than that. You send your boy to school that you may discover his "contents." You

keep him at school and send him to college in order that you may help to evoke the nobler traits of his endowment. But all the learned institutions of the world, even the hard school of life itself, *brings out* nothing that was not *already in.*

By way of explaining certain of the apparent anomalies of life we talk about "reversion to type." Thus, for example, the dog always tends to show his wolf ancestry. And if we feed him too much meat, or treat him cruelly, we hurry the revelation. They say that if small doses of alcohol be fed to a female cat her kittens will be as wild as their forbears of the jungle. But, notice that we do not make of dog or kitten anything he was not, by right of parentage, entitled to be. So the jungle traits which break out of the lives of human beings—the terrible ravening of the wolf, the ice-cold treachery of the tiger—are pathetic survivals of the beast in men and women.

Here, then, is the solemnity of parenthood. Let me declare it while the year is going. To hand down to a child crooked limbs, or weak lungs, or defective sight, is

bad enough. But to bequeath them the squalors and distempers of our souls is immeasurably worse. Most of this modern emphasis upon eugenics is superficial. We are talking about healthy bodies, but what about the soul? Jesus said, "Fear not them which kill the body, . . . but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body." Every wanton thought we indulge, every inward riot of our nature, every harbored suspicion or falsehood, is a means of helping to dwarf or kill the souls of children yet unborn, and of their descendants after them. And I believe that the generations yet unborn, in whose arteries our blood may flow, have profounder right to demand of us clean thoughts and hallowed practices than they have to expect us to abstain from alcohol and drugs.

Several times, since the Lusitania went down from a coward's blow in the dark, it has been said that the inventor of submarines is ashamed of his own device. I should think he might be. But, then, how about the builders of great guns, and cruel shrapnel, and poison gases? Really, they have little to

be ashamed of as compared with the man who harbors evil in his soul. Perhaps the worst that the commander of the submarine did when he sank the Ancona was to hurry a few more brothers and sisters into the presence of God. But to sow in the incalculably broad acres of posterity the seed of evil; to sin and to hand down the potency of it; to make others go spiritually lame because of our crippledoms; to poison the wells from which children unto the third and fourth generation shall drink—this is fearful!

Surely, David never meant *that*. David of the twenty-third psalm, of the æolian heart, David who panted for God as a hart for the water-brooks—I am sure David never meant to blight his own son. Ah, but, like the most of us, David wanted what he wanted, and at once—whether a cup of water from the well by the gate of Bethlehem, or the arms of Uriah's wife. And what he wanted he took, and Absalom must look out for himself. If the son could have inherited David's highest moods only! They say that Susanna Wesley never could recon-

cile herself to the moral vagabondage of a couple of her children. She had prayed and cried over them all. Yet two of the children who had lain in the arms that cuddled John Wesley nearly broke her heart. Was their vagabondage the fruit of her own raw moods or an entail, through Susanna Wesley, from her forbears? Who knows? O, the homes that talk much about the children who *honor* their parents, and never even speak the names of the dishonoring children!

But David. By and by the awakening. The old days came trooping back, some of them filled with memories David would have been glad to leave buried. And as David looked into the white, dead face of Absalom, David saw himself. The father had helped make the son. All the untamed animals, all the spiritual outlawry of David's nature—with the songs and the yearnings—had been passed on to Absalom. And Absalom reproduced his father's vices, *not* his virtues. Mind, I am not excusing Absalom. Beware of blaming upon your ancestors the passions you choose to indulge. Let each confess his wrong, as if it were all his own. I have no

soft word for Absalom; I am merely wondering how David felt when his boy's riotous life ended in tragedy, from the boughs of a great oak. And, wondering, I think I can interpret the bitterness of the cry with which I began the chapter: "O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee. O, Absalom, my son, my son!"

But I have spent too much time already upon the first point. Notice, now, a second. Absalom was handicapped by what you would call his advantages. He was born to the purple. He was strikingly handsome. The record says that "from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." He had ingratiating ways. People liked him and humored him, and gave him the better side of the road. He had brains too, and courage. In short, he fell heir to most of the special privileges you would crave for your own children. And his advantages helped defeat him, as they frequently do. Born to grub his way, and to sweat for the bread he ate, with face so homely he had to help people to forget it,

as Lincoln did, he might have left a fairer record.

A woman said to me once, with a smile of sublime complacency, as if she had achieved the impossible, "My child does not know the meaning of the word 'self-denial.'" Poor mother, and poor child; and poor child, most of all. Not to know the meaning of self-denial is not to know one of life's greatest words. Why, you cannot even get a kite up except against the wind. And how shall we expect to do better with a man? The best of the world's prizes have been fought for; they seldom drop into one's lap. And one of the surest ways to defeat a soul is to make its path easy.

Handicapped by advantages! Tell me who are apt to get most out of school and college. The ten-talent students? I have not found it so—except as the brilliant student deliberately and heroically increases the load. Always the student who takes most *out of* college is the student who *puts in* the most. And, frequently, he proves to be the fellow who fought every inch of the way for an education, building fires, selling books,

cooking his own meals, and darning his own socks. A father told me, not long ago, that he threatened his son with calamity if the son dared bring home first honors. And the son discreetly rested content with *second* honors. Perhaps that particular father knew his son. But let this single exception prove the rule. For, the rule is that you cannot ask too much as the ideal. And if there is anything finer than valedictory honors, tell your son to win *that.* At all costs let life remain earnest!

Nearly everybody seemed surprised when one of the younger Vanderbilts flung off his coat and plunged into work like a plain son of Adam, and finally got an important invention named for him. But why surprised? Simply because the world is not accustomed to expect great things from the sons of great men. Run over the list: Lincoln's son, Gladstone's son, Bismarck's son. But I must not weary you. If there be truth in the world's expectation, that truth is that the sons missed the very discipline which helped make the fathers. One of the most normal, and at the same time most pernicious, ambitions of

a kind father is to plan for the son an easier path than the father trod.

Did you hear of those young bees the owner of which felt so sorry for them that he helped them break out of their cells? The enveloping wax being removed, they came out easily. Eureka! But missing the friction which God intended them to meet in order to loosen their wings, they emerged wingless, and were stung to death by their companions. Such is life! Like it or not, such is life. Without imprisonment I am not sure that Cervantes could have written Don Quixote; without blindness Milton might have missed the glory of "Paradise Regained"; without heartbreak Beethoven could hardly have written his Ninth Symphony. Browning's great lines are the product of a prophet with a most unmusical ear. Paul's immortal ministry was achieved against the agony of a thorn. Yet some people cry out against the religion of Jesus because he demands so much. Man alive, that is one of the chief reasons for his not being forgotten. You may make a *living* by discounting commercial paper. But you

cannot even hope to make *heaven* by discounting your soul. Poor Absalom—he had so good a start that he lost the race!

But look at him again. He was mortally afflicted with the disease of self-importance. I wish there were time to review his story in the light of this observation. His arithmetic never got beyond "number one." Everything related itself to him and was appraised by him according to its bearing upon his own fortunes. Even when a fate more terrible than death befell his beautiful sister, Absalom cut short her cries, and waited two weary years until, by vengeance upon his foul half-brother, he could better *himself*. He told people frankly that he was fitted to be a far wiser king than his father. He balked at nothing that seemed to promise promotion. He even accepted the infamous suggestion of Ahithophel and violated the honor of his father's home, not in a moment of abandon, but with the express hope of winning over part of his father's troops. Absalom weighed the whole world against himself—and found the scale swinging his way.

Who does not know the symptoms of the disease. Tell me—before the year is older grown—why you cast off your one-time friend. Why? Because your pride was hurt, and sooner than let your pride be injured you would give up a friend. Tell me how you came to practice your business dishonesty, or why you wrought so cruel a revenge? As sign of the disease of self-importance. You saw your own interest so much bigger than that of others. I have been asked why I do not reply to a certain imputation. Honestly, I do not believe I can afford to. My case is not so important as that. As the youngster reminded the man who was "jouncing" the scales: "Mister, that don't do no good; you can only weigh what you are." And sometimes I fancy that this old sin-scarred, tear-stained planet of ours would be robbed of most of its shame and much of its bitterness if we could take ourselves modestly, before God and men.

But my chapter is nearly done, and I have left out large part of the story. You will have to read it yourself. It only remains for me to remind you what happened

at the end. Absalom's star sank drearily. His army melted like wax; his own life snuffed out as he hung suspended from a tree by the hair which everybody once envied. It is not a pretty story. And so they carried the news to his father. And the first messenger, seeing the look in the king's face, could not say what he came to tell. And David almost shrieked, "Is the young man, Absalom, safe?" And when he knew, he went wearily up the steps to the chamber over the gate. And as he went, you can hear him cry: "O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee. O, Absalom, my son, my son!"

XIV

THE MAN WHO COULD NOT WAIT

DESPITE the growing ban against race-track gambling, certain of our newspapers continue to print lists of "probable winners." I do not assume that you are interested in forecasts of the sort. Likely you have wished that your favorite sheet would cease to pander to a notorious evil. May I say that it would have ceased long since, and the race tracks would have gone out of business if the winners could be, and were, truthfully named in advance? What helps keep alive and flourishing—in some of our States—the race-track evil, is human inability to say with certainty which contestant must win.

I mention an unsavory subject in this place and fashion for the purpose of calling attention to an interesting fact. The best and most decorous of us are constantly nam-

ing the probable winners; not on the race track, of course, but in the contests of life. Rare is the mother who can refrain from telling herself which of her children will carry off the prize. Not long ago one of my own mother's friends quoted to me my mother's confident prediction concerning her two boys. For *one* she had no fears; for the *other,* misgivings many. Nor is it for me to say how truthfully she guessed. So you may hear teachers pick the winners in their classes. They can tell you, to a certainty, where an appreciative world will bestow its laurels. And they settle back with the look of a prophet whose fame is already secure. Alas for some of us if such self-constituted prophets were uniformly wise in their prognostications!

Thus, every day, we are tempted to write history backward. We name the winners—and losers too. We see John B. Gough in a drunkard's grave, and Benedict Arnold crowned with praise. If God accepted our estimates of men, he might doubtless save himself a deal of trouble, but what an indescribably less interesting and less hopeful

world this would be! "But for the suspended plot that is folded in every life," we might pick the winners.

For example, Esau, "the man who could not wait." I do not think there is any doubt that, as between Esau and Jacob, we should have named Esau as the "coming man." In the first place, he was the older—by an hour, if you please, being one of twins, but still the senior. The special blessing of primogeniture—which, for example, would have set Clarence on the throne of England, ahead of the present king—is not altogether factitious. It begins in a new mother's arms. No later born child ever quite fills the place of the first-born, in a mother's heart. Other children may prove more loyal, more resourceful, more loving. But deep in the soul of every mother is the memory of the unique joy with which she celebrated the advent of her first-born. And it would seem that the world had taken cue from its mothers. In a hundred ways, some obvious and others indirect, we pay tribute to the first-born. Esau was Rebekah's first-born. *He* had answered, first, the wistful, wonderful, holy

cry of her maidenhood. Jacob, also; her favorite in later years; but Esau first.

In the next place Esau was, apparently, the more virile man. And you would have picked him for that. He bulked big in inches. He had the advantage of a husky body—an advantage to which we cease not to pay homage. Because he was big and brawny he loved the open, where the winds sting and the wild things cry at night. Born in our day, Esau might have played center or tackle on the football team, or carried off fistic honors, or gone to Africa for big game. He was no hothouse plant: he grew rugged outdoors. Men would have nudged each other as he passed them in the street, and women would have blushed a trifle if they caught him looking—he was so much the man, in size. For, we are native worshipers of size. Not from his photographs would you ever suspect that the German emperor is small. He *is,* but he cannot afford to let the world know it. Hence when he poses for a picture the perspective is always arranged in such fashion that the Kaiser appears to be the largest figure in the group.

Vanity? No doubt; but also grim recognition of the world's instinctive worship of bigness. Esau had that clear advantage over Jacob. He made you expect more from him. Tradition said that when the twins came into the world Jacob's tiny hand was on Esau's heel—quaint prediction that any advantage of the younger would be got by guile.

But your selection of Esau would seem to have a further warrant. He had "taking ways." You would pick him for that reason. Don't you know how some people walk past all our guards and outposts into the very citadel of our hearts? We cannot help loving them, as we say. We love them in spite of their faults; love them even while they play fast and loose with our love. Their handclasp disarms suspicion: their very look melts ice. They are so hearty and chivalric they are welcome anywhere. I could name you men who, if they were small and stingy and lacking in courtesy, would be outlawed for the lives they lead, by all good women. But because of their open, affectionate way —well, I forbear to say what difference it

makes. Such a man was Esau. I do not think you could have resisted the rough charm of him. Everybody liked him. Even the old father showed special fondness for the boy who brought him venison. And I fancy that one reason Rebekah made so much of *Jacob* was because everybody else made so much of *Esau*. No real mother can stand that—even when the popular child happens to be her own first-born. Why, Esau was so good-hearted that he could scarcely hold a grudge over night. He forgave the brother who had cheated him so outrageously, and piled him with presents when Jacob was looking for hurt.

Big, bluff, brotherly Esau. Yet he missed the trail. For, as you trace the story of the twins you see Esau falter and Jacob forging ahead. What shall we make of the issue? This is what some would certainly make of it: they would make of it another instance of divine favoritism. You know how, sometimes, we say concerning another person's intimate or lover, "Well, I don't see what he finds in that man, or she in him." Fortunately, perhaps. If there were no

freaks in friendship, some of us might have no friends. And if a homely man stood no chance of finding a woman to love him, some of us might still be single. Well enough to let other people exercise their own tastes in all such matters.

But God? Must we accord him the same right, and for the same half apologetic reason? I am sure that a good many of us have felt that way as we read the Bible. Abraham, the sometime poltroon and liar, called in Scripture the "friend of God"; Moses, the man with a terrific temper, his hands red with the blood of another man, yet summoned to Sinai for special audience with the Most High; David, vain and adulterous, described as the "man after God's heart"; Peter, volatile, fretful, perfidious, yet picked for apostleship in the new church—surely God has a queer way of selecting his friends. Some of us could have assisted him had he given us the chance.

I wonder. I wonder if we could have picked more sagaciously than God has. There is a whole chapter here—and we must get back to Esau. Suffice that I say this,

merely, in passing. When you select an architect you choose him, presumably, for his technical skill. Not for his cleverness with the golf-club, nor for special conversational powers. It will be well for him to possess these additional talents; they may help him to get business; but, ordinarily, you pass them by when you are picking an architect for an important building. Similarly, if your train carries you safely to your destination, you do not ask the complexion of the engineer or the size of his feet. The important matter is that he knows how to run his engine. And when God chooses a man for some special task he picks a man with the necessary gift, or the aptitude for it. It by no means follows that the "chosen" is best in *every* respect. And when God passes one by, as he did Esau, you must not argue that God likes Esau less than he likes Jacob. We are not discussing affinities, but efficiency.

At any rate, this much is certain. Esau missed the prize of the high calling. The younger and less likable brother passed him in the race. And the lessons are very plain.

Esau was characteristically a man of impulse. That is one reason we like him. Above all others we shrink from cold-blooded folks. Great friendships, great sacrifices, great deeds are born in the fire of the heart. One goes so far as to say that "no love is pure that is not passionate"—meaning, I suppose, that an unpassionate love is most apt to be commercial or worse. But that is only one side of the case. On the other are the broken vows, the crushed hearts and the terrible sacrileges of a love that is certainly "passionate."

When I hear a man described as a "man of impulse" I want to know *what else* he is. Tell me that a certain object is a steam-engine and you have not told me a great deal. So much I might probably have discovered with the naked eye. What interests me quite as much is the strength of the boiler and the means of control. An engine that will not stop as well as start, or blows up as readily as it runs, is not an unqualified success as an engine. So with your man of impulse. I am glad to know that his soul kindles easily; but I want also to know what

it burns with. Can he direct his heat, or hold it in check upon occasion. *Esau couldn't!*

If all impulses were good! But when we talk about a man of fine impulses it is well to remember that fine impulses are *not all* the impulses he has. Wheat and tares grow together in the impulsive heart, as in any other. And, sometimes, the impulsive man seems to cultivate both kinds, with equal zeal—because, forsooth, both are in his heart. Poor Hetty Sorrel! She was not all bad. She was bad and good. And she gave way to impulse, of whichever kind it happened to be. And poor lovable, execrable Bobby Burns! You could no more have escaped loving him than you could have missed despising him. What a big, tender heart he had!—big enough for field mice, and the poor, and every woman he met. His trouble was that he trusted his heart—a thing you can never do unless Jesus Christ reigns in it.

Here was Esau's mistake. He accepted all his impulses as legal tender. He never bothered to examine them—until later. When he happened to fall in love with a woman of a hostile tribe you might as well

argue the winds. He loved her; he wanted her. That settled the matter. His father and mother might break their hearts. That was unfortunate but unavoidable, since *he* was the one to be pleased. And when one day, returning from the field, he smelled Jacob's pottage, his doom was sealed. He was not the man to deny himself anything he wanted. He reminds me of the good fellow who proudly says that when he wants a drink he takes it. A sheep does the same—and at no other time—and water only. "How much better is a man than a sheep?" Is he so much better that he can say "No" to himself when he wants a thing? Esau could not. The savor of the pottage took him by storm. In stress of impulse he could not even recall the name of the dish Jacob was preparing. "That red—yonder," he called it. He even fancied he was going to die unless he got the pottage. Nothing else was too big or sacred to let go, not even his birthright. And in a moment the scepter passed from Esau to Jacob. As the record puts it: "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

But look again. As a man of impulse

Esau was also a man of the moment. He was given neither to regrets nor to forebodings. He lived in the day. And for that we like him. So many of our friends cannot break away from yesterday. The musty odor of the by-gone is about them. They will not bury their sorrow even. They keep it near by, as a woman of my acquaintance kept the ashes of her husband in an urn. They will not say a fond farewell to their disappointments. Their golden age is in the past. Their faces are toward the west. And then there are the folks who are moving in the atmosphere of to-morrow. They are so enamored of the "distant scene" they cannot be happy with the present. O, if they would only take a little happiness with us now!

Esau did. He "seized the day," but he let everything else go. His calendar had one day only. The fame of the "minute man" is safe in American history. He was superbly "on the job," as we should say. But you will find a vast difference between a "minute man" and a "man of the minute." Esau was the latter. Nothing else mattered as compared with the present moment. See

him pleading with his brother. The steam of the lentils shut out the glory of his birthright. He was sure he should never live to enjoy the blessing of the first-born. Let him take what was at hand.

Have you never heard people talk thus? Have you never talked thus yourselves? This is the plea for a thousand excesses of our day; that life is short, and we shall be so "long-time dead." Subtle or openly defiant, tinged with infinite wistfulness—as if the Father's children could not quite forget the Father's house: or filled with scorn—as if, like George Eliot in her mocking days, we had been wakened from a bad dream; so is the plea of Esau to-day. But it *is* the plea of Esau. It has no yesterday and no to-morrow. It is without holy memory or burning hope. It is the cry of the man of the moment.

Lastly, Esau was a man of unfaith. I have said that already, in other language: then, let me say it in so many words. Esau missed the mark because he was a man of unfaith. Need I remind you that no man of unfaith ever greatly succeeds, or finally

arrives? We sometimes talk as if faith were a *religious* exercise. So it is—but in the largest sense. It is the ability of a man to link himself up with the immensities and the eternities. "Without faith," declared the great apostle, "it is impossible to please God." Of course. And without faith it is impossible to hold a friend, or win a campaign, or negotiate the real business of the soul. Your great discoverers and great scientists and great philosophers are almost apostolic in faith, only some of them stop before they reach Jesus Christ. They seem to exalt all kinds of faith, except the most beautiful faith of all—that is, the faith which remakes the soul.

Did you notice how the New Testament describes Esau—as a "profane person"? I do not understand that to mean that he used bad language. Perhaps he did. 'Tis the impulsive man who does most of the swearing. But "profane" signifies lacking a shrine. It means that a man has no holy of holies; never veils his eyes; trusts himself so far only as he can see. The best of life is beyond present sight and ken.

XV

THE MAN WHO COULD NOT FIND ROOM

Coming up Chesapeake Bay at night a few months ago I found myself keenly interested in the play of the steamer's searchlight. Here it picked out a vessel in the distance, yonder a building on shore. And having served its purpose of information or entertainment, the light moved on through its brilliant arc. Yet even after the great eye stopped furnishing its revelations, I kept some of the vivid images revealed. And I can easily recall them now. You have had the same experience as your train slipped through village or countryside at night. The light from your car window set in sudden relief a tree or stream, cattle asleep, or perhaps a mother with her baby in her arms. And the train swept on through the darkness, and not even the woman with the baby in her arms knew that you were

carrying with you her swiftly given photograph.

Somewhat similarly, blazing souls light up others, and what we call "history" is partial record of the illumination. All natures are incandescent, more or less; it remains, however, for certain great figures, not always pure or good, to show others to us. Well enough, for example, to remind ourselves of the service rendered Dr. Johnson by his biographer. But apart from Johnson Boswell himself would never have been heard of. The light of the greater fell upon the less. Much has been made of Cleopas Breckenridge, the man whom in boyhood Lincoln induced to sign the pledge, telling him that 'twould prove the best day's work the boy ever did. But what likelihood that the world would have been at pains to remember Cleopas Breckenridge unless he had fallen within the flaming arc of Abraham Lincoln's great soul?

One recalls the stray dog to which Jacob Riis gave, in his autobiography, a sort of immortality. Poor, unloved, unwanted mongrel, he had huddled close to Riis when the

latter was wandering the streets of the city. And even that momentary adjacence to a beautiful soul rescued the beast from oblivion, if not from death at the hands of a brutal policeman.

But I am not thinking now of incandescent souls in general. I am thinking of One who lighted up into immortality of remembrance, as none other ever could, a host of commonplace people. Save Saul of Tarsus, and Herod, with a few others, I suppose that most of the names familiar to us through the New Testament, would have faded from the memory of men long ago like writing in the sand. Now that we come to think of it, what a host of people Jesus saved from forgetfulness as well as from their sins! Because his supernal light fell upon them we know Andrew and Bartimæus, Mary and Martha, and a bright host of others. Even Pilate and Caiaphas are more sharply defined figures for the shining of Jesus. Why, we remember the thieves on their crosses, and the men who drove the nails, by reason of their relation to our Lord. He picked out for remembrance of the ages, souls that

within a few hours or years forgot themselves. And we see them, now, shining with goodness or dark with evil, in the light of Jesus.

Thus he saved for our Christmas study a certain ancient tavern and its much berated keeper. Perhaps it would have been kinder to leave them unremembered, at least so they would have escaped a flood of maledictions, for we are alarmingly prompt to tell what others ought to have done under certain conditions. Like that English woman who, one day, in the presence of Carlyle, poured forth upon the contemporaries of Jesus the vials of her scorn. How different her reception of him would have been, if she had been given the chance! Unfortunately, she pressed the gruff old Scot for an answer. And this is what she got: "Madam, if Jesus had come to England, rebuking our sins and exposing our hypocrisies, we should have cried, 'Take him to Newgate and hang him.' "

In the spirit of that caution I want you to study with me the man who, according to tradition, found "no room in the inn" for

Mary and her Boy. Frankly, we do not know anything about him, not even his name. I cannot prove that this world-famous little hostelry had a proprietor or manager, in any modern sense of the words. But somehow, in the passing radiance of the light that never was on land or sea, we seem to catch glimpses of him. And so with the chimes of Christmas still echoing in our souls I want to study him with you—this man who could find no room for Jesus to be born.

And the first thing to say about him is that he was a plain tavern-keeper as we are plain tradesmen or teachers or housewives. If anybody ever criticized him to his face, for his inhospitality on the first Christmas Eve, I am sure we can sympathize with his reply. He was neither saint nor prophet. He was merely an innkeeper earning a living. How could he be expected to foresee the glory of the place where a certain Babe should be born? You know how quick we are to *claim* our limitations—when others are calling us beyond them. Just as Moses did when God called *him* to a bigger field. Just as Isaiah did when God challenged him

with a great commission. Just as most of our brothers do when we give them sight of a spiritual promotion. Some of the most eloquent speeches I ever listened to were made by men and women in defense *of their own limitations.* We are constantly telling God and each other what we cannot be expected to do.

If war came to this country, and conscription followed, you can hardly guess the faulty eyes and constitutional disabilities that would suddenly be discovered. Men who had previously considered themselves physically sound, and experienced no difficulty whatever in getting all the life insurance they could pay for, would forthright find how frail they were. O the pitiful stories that could be told by any recruiting officer! But we need not waste heat on suppositititious cases. Here are men who say they would be members of the church if they knew how to control their tempers. Here are people telling you how generous they would be if the wealth of Rockefeller or Carnegie were theirs. Here are church members who would be saints but for their

present business. And here are disciples who would be glad to teach Sunday school classes, or win their clerks and comrades to Jesus Christ—*if only!*

O, shame! God calls to no service or heroism for which he fails to qualify the called. He shows the wonders of his skill, not upon our obvious excellencies, but upon our crudities and limitations. Look! Peter was a born coward, and John a natural fire-eater, and Zacchæus was in a bad business. Luther was narrow, and Wilberforce dissipated, and Lincoln a raw backwoodsman. "Old Put," as they called him, was a farmer, and Carey a shoemaker, and Billy Sunday a ball-player. God took them as they *were,* and made them such as we know them. When a man assures me what beautiful work he could do if he had proper tools, I know that he will probably never do any beautiful work. But the man who "has it in him" can show it me, with a pen knife, on a gnarled stick or a fragment of clay. So God. He wastes no time telling us the miracles he could work on born saints and spiritual prodigies. He goes to work on "Jack"

Kilrain, or Sam Hadley, or John B. Gough, or anyone who will give him a *chance*.

But the innkeeper of Bethlehem? Honestly, I do not think he was a monster of indifference. And instead of telling how much better we could have done in his place, suppose we ask how much better we really do, considering our rich advantages. He did no worse than we constantly do when we decline to make room for Jesus. He was by profession a hotel-keeper, as we should say. His business was to make his caravansarie the best known and most popular in the countryside. And he could hardly be expected to turn far aside for the purpose of meeting the needs of an exigent case. Business is business—and sentiment and kindness, pity and religion belong to another realm. Speaking of hotels, you would be astounded if the proprietor of one of our great hostelries gave any more attention to *you* than to a tile in the floor. You would not know him if you saw him. And you could not get to him if your room were on fire or your heart were broken. He is behind partitions "practicing his *profession*."

And whatever else he may be, he will be professional to the end of the chapter. Let the shoemaker "stick to his last," or he will make poor shoes.

Yes, let the shoemaker "stick to his last." But let him remember that he is a man in a world of men. And there are other things the world needs, even more than it needs good shoes, or wholesome bread, or honest garments.

> There are lonely hearts to cherish
> While the days are going by.

And there are souls to be made, and vagabonds to be got home, and great missions to undertake, and God himself to be entertained in our lives. And, O, the fearful losses we suffer while we are practicing our chosen profession, sticking to our last. Here was the trouble with priest and Levite in the parable. Both saw the wounded man by the roadside. One of them went so far as to cross the road to get a better look. I suppose that both were sorry for him. But they had appointments that day. And if they paused to minister, they might miss an

appointment with God in the temple. But think of the greater chance they missed by their absorbing professionalism. Maybe the Samaritan was busy too. Most of the world's rarest service is rendered by the busiest people. And when a man tells me he is "too busy" to practice the healing of souls or to play the Christian, I scarcely know whether to smile or to groan. I assume that the good Samaritan was a busy man. But the most immortal piece of business he ever did was by the wayside, on a broken fellow-pilgrim.

The business of Gladstone was statecraft, but he was remembered more tenderly, I suppose, by the sick crossing-sweeper he visited than by any of his supporters in Parliament. Dr. Bernardo was by profession a physician, but who shall estimate the glory of his ministry among the waifs of London? Grant was a soldier, but he was so much more than a man of uniform and military codes that he graciously declined to accept Lee's proffered sword; and you see him entering Richmond holding a little child by the hand. Paul was a preacher, but how intimate he

was in the shepherding of the flock! Jesus was Redeemer. For that he came, that he might "save his people from their sins." But, to the dismay of his disciples, he was so utterly unprofessional that he could be interrupted at any time by a cry of hunger or helplessness.

Be the lawyer, or salesman, or surgeon or teacher. Act the part. Practice your profession. Carry the marks—so that men may recognize you, as they do some clergymen by the cut of their coats. But remember *what else* God calls you to be. And be watchful lest, some day, in your devotion to your profession you close your door against Jesus.

But the Bethlehem innkeeper: we are not done with him yet. And even if I romance about him, I am sure I shall not wander far from the facts. He ran his tavern—just as you run your dry goods or insurance office—to make money. He rose in the morning, just as you do, to make more money. He estimated in terms of the money-changers his success as a man. Perhaps if you could have shown him the financial advantage of

making room for Mary, the story would have read differently. But that is another matter. I always shudder when I hear men begin to tell how much more money they have made since they gave their hearts to God. Seriously, I do not believe God comes to help us make money—except . . .

What do you make money for? Why, to buy clothes and food, in order that you may be able to go down town again tomorrow to make more money: so that you may buy still other food and clothes, and thus make yet more money, and buy more clothes and food.

Was a more pitiful circle ever conceived for the soul of a man to swing through? To make money and to buy! It is like feeding a dog for the sake of keeping breath in his body, or like purchasing an automobile without expectation of using it, or like collecting pictures and hiding them in safe deposit vaults, or like marrying a woman in order to get a housekeeper. Men of trade, we are not sent into the world to make money any more than we are sent here to breathe and eat meals. All these other functions

are incidental to the real business on which God sent us. The real business of life is to "make our souls," as the French say, and to help other people to make theirs. Our real business is spiritual, and we sell goods, or plead cases, or keep books, in order to pay expenses.

Blessed be God for the new emphasis on tithing; for the recovered truth of stewardship: for all voices, whether of pain or joy, which set in its true light the function of making money. I see by the papers that certain New York restaurants served ostrich last holiday season. Anything to be different, anything to help people spend their money. So in Rome, in the fateful days before her fall, they dissolved pearls in vinegar, and cooked peacocks' tongues, for the epicure. I wonder what men think *money is for!* By contrast, I remind you of Jenny Lind, praying that she might be permitted to live two years more, in order to earn money enough to complete the orphans' home she had started. You could not hurt with money a soul like that. And if you thought of your earnings *thus,* I could pray

God to double your income. How *do* you think of it?

But to return to our friend the innkeeper for a further lesson. Much has been made of the embarrassment of his position. Any tavern-keeper would hesitate to offer hospitality under similar conditions. The hour was late, and perhaps he did not quite believe Mary's story. With less reason than *he* had *you* have turned folks from your doors. But of what I am suggesting, the record gives no hint. Maybe he was the kindest man in the world; but the inn was full. That is all the Scriptures say: "And she brought forth her first-born son, and . . . laid him in a manger, because *there was no room for them in the inn.*" Just crowded out—nothing worse and nothing better than that. Merely crowded out.

So to-day. Men do not *deny* Jesus Christ nowadays, at least not with loud oaths and blasphemy. They do not even *despise* him. They respect him, and pay him a certain sort of homage. I could quote you pages of tributes to Jesus from the lips of skeptics and freethinkers. The tragedy to-day is

that men cannot find *room* for Jesus Christ. Their interests are so many, and the claims upon their strength so various, Jesus gets the "go-by." Some one names the following as the greatest lines Browning ever wrote:

> I say—
> The acknowledgment of God in Christ,
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the world and out of it,
> And hath so far advanced thee to be wise.

But the deeper fact is that our *reason* does not need Jesus Christ so keenly as our *hearts* do. "No room for Jesus! And is your heart so full, my brother? No room for Jesus when Jesus is your only hope? No room for Jesus when salvation never crosses any threshold where his feet have not been set? No room for Jesus when, except by Jesus, there is no eternal life?"

XVI

THE MAN WHO BLAMED OTHERS

To say the least, Aaron was a poor reporter. To say the most—but that is the point of my story. For the moment, then, I content myself with characterizing Aaron as a poor reporter. Most people are. To tell what really transpired in a given instance is always difficult. It is difficult even when we are *not* personally involved, either for praise or blame. And when we *are* involved a correct account is next to impossible. Here we are trying, every day, to make head or tail out of the conflicting reports of the war. We lay down the paper with a sigh. To judge from dispatches from Paris, the tide is going one way; but according to Berlin, the same tide is moving in a contrary direction. Nor is all responsibility for the divergence to be charged to the censors. The fact is that no two persons

ever reported, in equivalent terms, the same event. And when not even the most truthfully inclined reporter can keep out of his narration his personal sympathies and hopes, what can you expect?

Try it yourself. Attempt to tell your friend or your family how the automobile happened to collide with the trolley car—particularly if you chanced to be driving the automobile. Be the most veracious man in the world, and you will not succeed in telling the same story the other man tells. Try to detail a certain interview in which you figured: then listen while another party to the interview gives his account. You will be interested, at least, in the discrepancies. Sometimes I fancy that most of our misunderstandings might be spared, and large part of the world's bitterness gone if, even with the best intentions, we could see things fairly, and report them as they are.

But Aaron. Recall what had just occurred. His brother had stayed in the mount too long for his people's patience. It is always hard to keep a crowd up to concert pitch. Israel was so much like us that she

wanted gods similar to her neighbors. So, at Aaron's suggestion, she brought her gold ornaments together. And Aaron melted the trinkets into a mass and shaped it in the semblance of a calf and bade the people worship. *That* is what happened, according to the record. Now, observe how differently Aaron reported to his brother. I may say that any sin looks different when somebody else looks at it with you. By the time Moses had gotten down from the mount Aaron experienced a change of heart with respect to his handiwork. Hence, omitting most of the story, he reported the transaction thus: "They gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Poor, poor Aaron! You would think him the most surprised man of them all, when forth from the furnace came the shameful idol. Not a word about the arrangements he had made; not a whisper about the mold; not a hint concerning the graving tool he used. Nothing but innocent astonishment that such a monstrous result could follow so harmless an act.

"I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." If Aaron were the only man to

make such shift of responsibility, I could not understand it. But, alas! I find men and women constantly doing the very same thing. For example, did you notice any one of the European combatants confessing blame for starting the war? I had not noticed it. Off hand, it would appear that some particular nation must have set the torch. Such conflagrations do not result from spontaneous combustion. *Somebody* must be responsible. And each side is charmingly frank in confessing for the other. But, thus far, I have not heard either side assume the blame. Or, to narrow our view, let your child be guilty of a misdemeanor. Suppose he breaks the vase, or gets into a fight, or comes in late for dinner. Does he look you straight in the eye and admit unreservedly his fault? Or does he admit so much only as leaves him practically clear? Why, they go so far as to say that the classical instance of George and the cherry tree is apocryphal. And even if the thing really happened, we might discover that George admitted less than we supposed. He cut down the tree because it was infested with gypsy-moths, or his

mother needed kindling wood, or the teacher told him he must take more exercise. So inveterate is the excusing practice among children that if your child displayed a different spirit you would be alarmed; you would be afraid he was going to die.

Ah, but why should I pick on the little folks when here are the rest of us, from whom the children learn? Here is a business man who has lost his ideals. At least he acts as if he had lost them. He does things which he would have scorned years ago. He has been growing callous to the finer touches of life. There is a cold, hard look in his eye, and his voice has roughened. And when you reproach him, when for an instant, now and again, he stands in the white light of God's open day, what does he say? This, usually: that the *street* has made him what he is. He did not plan it, or wish it, or even consent. Forces stronger than his ideals seized him and made a plaything of him. He cast in the gold and there came out this unhallowed shape.

Or here is a woman who has been growing "worldly," as we say. I do not refer to the

modishness of her costume, nor to her fondness for bridge-whist, nor yet to her clamor for equal suffrage. I am thinking of a certain indefinable spirit which the best of us always, and the worst of us in our best moments, never become reconciled to, in women. A young man of the day was telling me how he happened to select his wife. "The first time I met her," he said, quite artlessly, "she was the only girl at the table who did not drink cocktails and smoke cigarettes." *He* used both, without scruple, but he picked his wife because she used neither. Back in the soul of every decent man is a sort of reverence for women. I think every woman knows it. She ought to thank God for it. And when she begins to sacrifice it to the gods of the day, when she learns to put a price on everything, knowing the value of nothing; when she feels within herself the chill of tragedy, this is what she usually does. She blames the age she lives in. Had she been born in grandmother's day, the event might have been different. But times have changed, and she with them. How could she be expected to stave off the

inevitable? She merely cast into the fire the gold of her womanhood and there came forth this deplorable result.

Or see the same dodging in another realm. Robert G. Ingersoll used to say that his father's Puritanism made the son a scoffer. And one of the great French infidels laid all the blame at the door of an infidel poem he had been obliged to learn in childhood. Did you never hear the same specious plea? Have you never made it on your own behalf? Skepticism is not arrogant nowadays: it is apologetic. It has a wistful look and a minor tone. It confesses the loneliness of Clifford over the death of the "Great Companion." It sails by dead reckoning, having no glimpse of the Sun of Righteousness. But it is not frank. It blames the books of the day, or the speculative questions men are asking, or the delinquencies of church members. Unbelief is merely an unfortunate result. The skeptic cast his creed into the fire and, alas! there came out this hideous thing.

But why should I multiply instances? Rare is the man or the woman who stands

up and takes the blame for weakness or treachery, cruelty or self-indulgence. The rest of us do what Aaron did: we shift the blame to the furnace.

Why? Well, in the first place, because we cannot bear to lose caste in the opinion of others. Aaron felt himself scorching under the rebuking eyes of his brother. He had heard the stone tables splinter on the hillside, in Moses's terrible anger. Aaron must win back, somehow, his brother's confidence: hence he blamed the furnace. Don't believe anybody who assures you that he does not care a farthing for other people's opinions. The man who does not care what other people think of his conduct, has not yet been born—or is in an asylum. Even the libertine who flaunts his profligacy in your face, cares what you think. He wants you to admit what a perfect devil he is. That is one part of his satisfaction—that he shocks the neighbors. And, O, the pitiful subterfuges the rest of us practice in our efforts to keep up appearances.

You cannot tell a man's circumstances by his coat. The saddest poverty in the world

is proud poverty. You can see his *coat,* but you cannot see his *stomach.* Hence, many a man will starve his body before he will let you see him wear a shabby coat. I have known a pauper to spend his last nickel, almost, for a shoe-polish. Such shifts we make to keep from the world the facts. Never shall I forget the afternoon I surprised my friend by coming upon him in an abandon of grief. He that bore his hurts so stoically; who was morbidly afraid to let the world know what tender heart he had; thinking himself alone, had let go. And I, unwitting, walked in upon him. I shall not repeat the remark he made; it was more expressive than elegant. It amounted to this —that he would have given a hundred dollars rather than have me catch him in such undress of soul. Proud, dear fellow; I could but love him more for his shame!

But we are never quite so anxious as when we try to blind folks to our *sins.* In the realm of morals we must keep up appearances at any cost. And one handy way is to blame the fire for what we are. A man explained to me elaborately how he came to

be profane. He said that his early days were spent in the stockyards, where everybody swore. But why should he be at pains to tell me that? Simply because he wanted me to feel that, by nature, he was too good a fellow to indulge such a wretched habit. Specifically, he was confessing the power of a bad habit; really, though perhaps half unconsciously, he was bidding for my full respect. When a dissolute fellow tells you that college made him what he is, what is he driving at? This, manifestly: he wants you to rate him higher than his present grade. He cannot live comfortably with your condemnation, expressed or implied. Hence he blames the furnace for the shape you despise.

So, in a thousand ways, we emulate Aaron in his effort to keep his brother's good opinion. Most of us have the grace to be ashamed of our faults, even when we entertain no intention of lopping them off. The golden calf is an altered object when Moses joins us in looking at it. Possibly we expect to worship it again as soon as Moses's back is turned. Meantime we prefer him to think us too good for such practices.

But look again at Aaron's specious plea. And I think that you will discover that Aaron was doing more than attempt to justify himself in the eyes of his brother; he was also attempting to justify himself in his own eyes. He had not only to live with Moses, he had to live with himself. And he would be vastly happier if he could hold himself guiltless of intentional sin. At least that is the way of the human heart. You have instance of it on the first pages of the Bible. Hear Adam: "caught with the goods," as we should say. Hear him plead extenuation. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me, . . . and I did eat." (By the way, the woman's argument was not much nobler: she blamed the serpent. But I am speaking of the man.) Adam was not trying merely to avert judgment; he was trying to believe in himself. He could not bear to be shrunken in his own guilty eyes. He wanted to feel himself undamaged by his transgression. He was the passive instrument in the hands of a crafty woman, hence innocent. Or, open another book, and at the tragedy of Mac-

beth. You recall the man's feverish longing to be king. To that end he was willing to lay every means under contribution. He would not stop at murder even. But hear him plead his own innocence:

"If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me,
Without my stir."

Shakespeare knew the human heart as few interpreters have known it. He knew that a guilty Macbeth could not even enjoy the fruits of his own crime, except as he persuaded himself that they really dropped into his waiting hands, without his "stir."

But we do not need to turn for examples to Shakespeare or the Bible. Here are we: never more eloquent than when we plead our case at the bar of our own conscience. A man cannot live on indefinitely, both unforgiven and unjustified in his own sight. He must square himself with himself. If he is not ready to *ask* forgiveness, he must argue that he does *not need* it. The most difficult task in the world is not to live with your *neighbors* or your *family;* the most

difficult task is to live with *yourself*. And it is for aid in the undertaking that we use Aaron's plea. Myself or the furnace, one or the other must bear the blame. Better the furnace—which has no conscience. "I cast it into the fire and there came out this calf."

So much for the picture as it is: let me draw it as it might have been. For, our hope lies in improving upon Aaron. Into the home of my friend came a baby dreadfully marked from birth. There were other children, six of them, all sound and attractive. Then came the lassie who almost broke his heart. Did he repudiate her? So the Spartans might have done. Not so my friend—or I should be ashamed to call him "friend." The disfigured baby was his in the same sense as were the perfect children of his home. And with breaking heart and wide-open purse he owned her completely. No pains or love was spared. She was his. He claimed her.

Did you ever think of doing that with your sin? Claiming your sin? O, not as I have heard men, with noisy vehemence, as if

they were proud of their sins. This is the note which sometimes offends us in the testimony of redeemed rascals: they seem to parade their former sins.

I do not mean that, of course. I mean, a sorrowful claiming of one's faults with the same frank ownership one asserts to his virtues. You have no more right to deny parentage to your sin than to a homely child. It is yours. Common honesty demands that you do the thing *Aaron* would not do: confess your sin as *your own.*

Moreover—and here the light breaks in like a flood—that way lies forgiveness. God can forgive a man, not a furnace. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." But not when we blame the furnace. Recall that tense moment in which David saw himself. At first he cried out in rage. Then he broke down in shame. "I have sinned," he said. He admitted his own progeny of evil. He claimed his fault, with grief. And back came the most beautiful word that ever falls upon human ears: "The Lord hath put away thy sin." Suppose he had blamed the *furnace?*

XVII

THE MAN WHO FACED BOTH WAYS

In a sense, every man is two-faced. As one of our modern poets has it:

> God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
> Boasts two soul-sides: one to face the world with,
> The other to tell a woman when he loves her.

In *that sense* there are no single-faced folks. Only a man of putty or iron can turn to the woman he loves the same face he shows to his business competitors. Carlyle, sitting, whole evenings through, with his dear old mother, in absolute content; or yearning for her like a homesick boy, in his latter years, is a different Scot from the Carlyle who scathed England for her shams. I do not think that little children would have held out coaxing arms to our Lord while he was driving the money-changers from the temple. There is an outward *in*consistency which wit-

nesses to the deepest *inward* consistency. Thus a man may be most profoundly himself when he seems altered. In this sense the very best people you know are "two-faced," and ought to glory in it. Even God changes his aspect when we change our ways from evil to good—or contrariwise.

Needless to say, then, that *such* double-facedness needs no essay, except in praise. I am thinking of a very different variety; the sort we despise in a dog or a man. And for want of a better example I have selected Balaam. Frankly, I do not know how to classify Balaam. I do not know whether to rank him with sinners or saints. He whiffled about like a weather-vane in unsettled weather. The moment you think you can put your finger on him, he is somewhere else. Even the man who tried to bribe him finally gave him up in despair. Balaam had the discomfiting combination of itching palm and New England conscience. He was a real prophet, but with dark, subterranean instincts. He lacked courage to do what he wanted to do. Not for a houseful of silver and gold would he go a hairsbreadth "beyond

the word of the Lord, to do less or more," yet he would give God ample opportunity to change the troublesome word. Poor, paradoxical Balaam, how shall I classify him?

But, so far as that goes, how shall I *classify* anybody? This business of separating the sheep from the goats is not so simple as it sometimes appears. Every competent teacher knows that the most searching examinations ever devised fail to discriminate justly between pupils. The millionaire is not necessarily a better business man than his clerk. In a burst of enthusiasm for the old political regime, an apologist recently threw down his glove before this proposition: that only the best men in the State ever reach the governor's chair. O, if only it were true! And you may recall that one of our most popular novelists said that the best women rarely fall in love with the best men.

And when we attempt to draw dividing lines, what sorry work we make! I can distinguish as between the genus wolf and the genus tiger. I may even differentiate among the various branches of the duck family—as the canvasback, the hornbill, the

black-head, and all the rest. I may learn how to separate scientifically the Malay from the Mongol, the Teuton from the Slav. But who shall tell me how to divide the sheep from the goats? There is no genus "sinner" or genus "saint." A "sinner" is a potential saint gone wrong; and a saint is, more often than not, a "sinner" saved by grace. The worst reprobate in the city has in him still the imperishable seeds of goodness, while the most beautiful soul still confesses kinship with the beast. Science has lately informed us that the blood of English and African is identical in constituents and qualities. Put under a microscope a drop from the veins of a Bushman and a drop from the veins of a Virginian, and not even the shrewdest analyst can tell which is which. So, in each one of us, the savage contends with the Christian, Nero with Paul. None are wholly good, none irredeemably bad. Enough bad in the best and enough good in the worst to keep everybody humble.

How, then, shall I classify Balaam? I do not even try. Nor do I think that Balaam could classify himself. Who can? We may

still hear the vociferous Pharisee, out in front of the temple, calling upon heaven and earth to witness that he "was not as other men," especially the publican. But if the Pharisee had been as sure as he *seemed,* he might have lowered his voice. We are never quite so vehement as in affirmation of what we do not wholly believe. Let a man have a settled conviction and he can take it to bed with him. He does not need to sit up half the night warning off the dogs of heresy. 'Tis the unconvinced man who makes most of the noise. And he uses the noise to help him make up his mind. No, the Pharisee was not so sure as he seemed. In the quiet of his own heart he saw his own "wilderness side," as Brierly calls it. Benvenuto Cellini has left on record, impartially set down, his seraphic raptures and his most unhallowed amours. He seems to narrate the one with as much gusto as the other. It is a weirdly strange confession, as if he would fling upon posterity the task he could not assume for himself—that of taking his own moral grade. Goethe, in his "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul," makes that soul cry out, in full, terri-

fying view of its own hidden evil, "Great God, what a discovery!" Imagine, then, such a "beautiful soul" called upon to pass judgment upon itself; to name its eternal destiny.

Such is the dilemma of every one of us. You may tell me, of course, that when a man goes wrong he knows it. Something within tells him that he has missed the mark. Usually so. And you will also say that when a man goes straight he has the approval of his conscience. And that too is commonly the case. Ah, if life were as simple as that! But when the same man goes *both* right *and* wrong; when he gets up from his knees to scold the children or plan a questionable business deal; or when, from the far country of spiritual vagabondage, he suddenly falls unaccountably homesick for the Father's house, the problem becomes very complex. In each man both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. But in Stevenson's famous story Dr. Jekyll knew *himself* to be the real man, even when he was doing damnable things as Mr. Hyde. Whereas, some of us could hardly name our real self, whether

saint or rascal. Most of us are probably credited with good deeds enough, if they could be kept separate, to land us in heaven. And most of us have probably been guilty of baseness enough, if it could be treated as a thing apart, to land us in perdition. The trouble is that good and evil are inextricably mixed in our lives. Who but God can distinguish the wheat from the tares, and say if the field is worth while?

But Balaam. For the purpose of sharpening the points already made, I need not have selected Balaam. Any other familiar character would have served as well—say Joseph, or Peter, or even Paul himself. Balaam's case was different, and more serious. Balaam was the man who never could quite make up his mind. See him at the opening of the story, moving from place to place in the hope of seeing duty from a different angle: then see him, near the close of the chapter, still undecided. Balaam was impartial to a tragic degree. Every factor in his equation canceled out and left him his problem unsolved.

Some morning you walk out of the house

with a feeling of delicious uncertainty. Which way shall you go? 'Tis a holiday, perhaps, and you are perfectly free to choose your direction. Shall it be north or south? There are advantages either way; and for the moment you balance the one against the other. Perhaps there is wisdom as well as pleasure in the mood of indecision. We form some judgments rashly. Some of the saddest journeys of life are those in which we retrace our steps over the wrong path. But to tarry too long at the gate, to weigh considerations too finely, is a disease. Balaam had that philosophical spirit in deadly form. He never could quite make up his mind. The more he pondered the more unsettled he became.

I have a friend who reminds me of Balaam. He is an exceedingly wise man, is my friend. When he speaks wisdom falls from his lips. He is so wise that if he stopped half way through his talk, I might know how to vote or what to think. The misfortune is that after he has stated, in beautiful language, all the reasons for supporting a particular proposition, he goes on

to name, with equal force, the countervailing arguments. And with this result, that, at the close of his speech, I am as much confused as when he began. Point against point, he checks them all off until, so far as *he* is concerned, my mind is in chaos. Over and over again I have wished he would nail his flag to the masthead of some particular cause, even if he had to surrender later.

You remember how, as children, we used to strip the petals one by one from a field daisy. "She loves me, she loves me not; she loves me, she loves me not." And so on, until the last petal had fallen. And if one did not choose to accept the decision, he could select another flower and repeat the monologue. Meantime, some less wistful and more venturesome boy carried off the girl.

To such heroic note life is keyed. Most of the world's prizes fall to him who knows how to decide. During the early days of the French Revolution there was a moment in which, conceivably, the tide might have turned. The mob was pressing toward Louis's palace. "Shall I fire, sir?" asked the

general. "Not yet, not yet," was the reply. Again the same question, and again the same answer. Then, as the mob pressed closer, Louis cried: "Now fire." "It is too late, sir," came the reply. "Can't you see that the rabble and the soldiers are already exchanging arms?" And the life of Louis XVI paid forfeit for his indecision. Who does not despise the shuffling and side-stepping of the Balkan States? This carrying of water on both shoulders shames everybody. If they should be crushed, in the mêlée, out of the semblance of sovereign states, most of us would feel that they had but gotten their deserts.

"How long halt ye between two opinions?" cried the prophet of old. It is not more *argument* that most of us are needing. It is *action* we need. We know our duty just as well as we need to know it. More information tends only to confuse. Better make a hundred mistakes than stand undecided at the gate, as Balaam did. Balaam knew perfectly well what he *ought* to do. He knew equally well what he *wanted* to do. And between the two you see him suspended,

waiting for some one else to cast the deciding vote. Pilate had an opportunity to immortalize himself. Had he done what he knew was right, the Christian Church would make pilgrimage to his resting place, or build him a mausoleum. But in the moment of supreme importance he wanted to debate with Jesus. And later he asked the rabble what *they* thought he ought to do. Anything to be rid of the necessity of deciding. An army chaplain tells of an officer who came to discuss the Bible. He could not understand certain doctrines, he declared. And he put up such a wry face that one might have imagined he was really losing sleep over the matter. But the chaplain knew his man, and this is how he answered: "Yes, I know that many passages in Scripture are confusing. The seventh commandment, however, is perfectly plain." So I make free to say that in most of our moral dilemmas the real issue is perfectly plain. All we lack is the courage to *take* the path we *see*.

But poor Balaam! He attempted the most hopeless task in the world; he tried to

go both ways at once. You cannot do that on a sidewalk or in a railway train. But multitudes of people seem to think it can be done in the soul. Balaam tried. He tried exceedingly hard. It seemed he never would give up trying. Balaam was a singularly gifted man. Some of the most exalted words of Scripture fell from his lips while he was trying to face both ways. Take, for example, this glowing fore-glimpse of Messiah: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel." An unusual man, only, could say that. Balaam said it. Take this tender panegyric of the good: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Only one who really loved goodness would say that. Balaam said it. Then imagine such a man paltering with Balak, his eyes glued to the reward of his perfidy.

But you do not need to *imagine* it. You can *see* it any day: upright men stooping to chicanery and deceit; tender hearts steeling themselves to cruel work; Christians playing

with fire. It has been noted that three of the most brilliant public men America ever produced, each of Presidential timber, failed of their supreme ambition—Clay, Webster, Blaine. They were towering men. But each was obsessed with desire to be President: so obsessed that he was willing to face both ways. Men called Clay the "Great Compromiser." And both Webster and Blaine trimmed their sails to the fitful breeze. And all three died, mortally wounded at the heart. "No man can serve two masters," said Jesus. But the world has never given up hope of doing it. We want the rewards, both of goodness and evil. The circus-actor rides two horses at once, but not headed in opposite directions. We are attempting, in *morals,* a feat which the circus-rider would not attempt in the *ring.* It is both heartbreaking and hopeless.

Let me show you how hopeless. Turn a few pages of Scripture, and you find this record: "Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword." In the camp of Israel's enemies, by the hand of the people he had tried to curse, he fell—type of the

man who faces both ways. I say nothing about his personal grief. Nobody had use for him. He merely lived on—like Benedict Arnold—to curse the day he was born. The fate of facing both ways! One day, a good many years ago, I asked my younger brother to push off our boat from the stake. He pushed well, for he was strong. But he forgot to let go the stake. He was also afraid to take his feet from the deck of the boat. There he hung for a few seconds, while the sail filled and the boat swung sharply away. I shouted, but to no purpose, and an instant later he was floundering in the bay. How vivid that scene is after twenty-five years!—perhaps because I see the thing repeated constantly: men trying to hold God with one hand and sin with the other. High dreams won't save them: Balaam had great visions. Passions of goodness won't save them: Balaam wanted to be good. But he also wanted to have his own way. He demonstrated the despair of the experiment of facing both ways.

XVIII

THE MAN WHO RAN PAST THE SIGNAL

ACCORDING to press dispatches, the blame for the latest New Haven Railroad horror is likely to be fixed upon the dead engineer. Perhaps it were better so. The poor man is past objecting, and blame must always be set down at somebody's door. The world's sense of grievance at such a tragedy is rarely abated until somebody is blamed. Better, almost, to blame the *wrong* person than to leave responsibility unplaced. Yet, what a task it is! Nothing in the world is more difficult than a just apportionment of blame. And such solemn business, too—far more solemn than the distribution of praise. Praise is sunshine. Even an undeserved flood of it seldom hurts the recipient. Whereas blame is vitriol. It burns, and leaves such a piteous scar—deepest when undeserved.

But we are thinking of Pilate, the man who once ran past the warning signal; the man who has always been blamed. Nor do I think he can be cleared. I shall not even try. He pulled the trigger: he let the fury loose upon our Lord. However reluctant his part in the tragedy, it was dreadful and definite. He "delivered Jesus to be crucified." Outside the trenches, somewhere in Europe, to-night lies a mother's boy with a bullet wound in his head. For the moment I forget the thousands of such slain: I am thinking of one white face splotched with crimson. Who's to blame? The foe who pulled the trigger, or the munition worker who made the shell, or the commanding officer who gave the signal to charge, or the sovereign whose imperial ambitions turned a continent into a shambles? Who is to blame that a mother's boy lies cold, with his unseeing eyes toward the stars, outside the trenches, somewhere in Europe? I do not know. Fortunately I do not need to be informed. I should not want to be God.

But this is certain. Somebody had to pull the trigger to complete the awful tragedy of

hate. Lacking the trigger-hand the whole enginery of destruction were as harmless as a summer breeze. *Somebody* must release the missile toward the head of that mother's boy. If not Hans, then Fritz; if not Jean, then Jacques. *Somebody.* Always somebody. And so I think of Pilate. Let everybody else bear a just share of the blame—Judas, Herod, Caiaphas, the priests, the rabble who flung the taunts, and the soldiers who drove the nails. Even so, we cannot clear Pilate. He did his part: he pulled the trigger.

What remains to be said? Well, for example, this: that he was a well-meaning man who wished no harm to our Lord. The fact is that he had, offhand, no deeper interest in the case than we have in the feuds of African tribesmen. Evidently, Pilate was not partial to Jews. Likely he sometimes wished, as a certain Roman emperor did concerning the early Christians, that the whole sect had one neck and he could wring it. What did he care whether the priests liked Jesus, or what Jesus thought of them? The whole affair was one of superlative in-

difference to him—until it was brought within his official purview. Even then he took the first opportunity to transfer the case to Herod. He wanted nothing to do with it. Far be it from him to *look for* trouble: he always tried to look the other way when trouble was around. He was a well-meaning man who certainly wished no harm to Jesus. And as *that* sort of man Pilate was used to help on the crucifixion.

I wish somebody would write a book on the crimes of the well-meaning man; I mean the crimes in which he becomes unwilling and unintentional partner. Evil never can get on without the aid of the well-meaning man. It uses him for a foil, sights its gun on his kindly shoulder, lets him pull its chestnuts out of the fire. You do not suppose that a certain club's waiters were in the Chicago poisoning plot? That would be too risky. Criminals know better than to share their secrets widely. They do not need to. There are plenty of well-meaning men who can be counted upon to carry out a nefarious purpose, and with this advantage—that they do not know what they are doing.

For example: the liquor forces of our country are fighting desperately. They like not the writing on the wall. But they have changed their tactics. They are not truculent any more: they are suave, benignant, ingratiating. They do so yearn to be good. And they are so suddenly solicitous for the welfare of the land. They know perfectly well that if the hands are turned back on the prohibition clock, well meaning people must do the turning. None but good citizens can ever defeat a great reform, once launched. But, alas! you never can be sure what the average well-intentioned citizen will do—with specious voices in his ears. And here are we trying so hard to be neutral in the greatest war of the ages that nobody in particular loves us. Belligerents buy our munitions, and pay hard cash for the same. But I do not think we should feel flattered if we knew what they really think of us. With the best of intentions, and without mercenary aims at the beginning, hating war and all its misbegotten progeny, we have succeeded in pleasing nobody—unless it be God. And I fear that when the final history

is written we shall not appear to have pleased *him*. If we had not been so indiscriminately well-meaning, we might have saved Belgium —and God knows what beside. "Peacemakers or Laodiceans?" Concerning the one, Jesus said, "Blessed are" they. But concerning the other: "I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art . . . neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth."

And here is the well-meaning man with Jesus Christ before him. Always the real trial of Jesus is in the court of the well-meaning man. I refer to the man who admires our Lord, and approves of the church, and sends his children to Sunday school. Always the trial is before *him*. Still, as of old, Jesus's friends cannot *save* him from a cross. Still, as of old, even his enemies cannot *send* him to it—without Pilate's consent. Always some Pilate between the mob and its vengeance. And sometimes I fancy that Jesus has more to fear from the well-meaning man than from all arch-haters and arch-conspirators. Porphyry Celsus, Julian the apostate, Voltaire with his terrible scorn,

Renan with his laughing compliments, Bradlaugh with his clumsy hate—these, plus all more modern foes, never can send Jesus to his cross. Pilate must speak. Alas! we know just what he said, one fateful morning, long years ago. I wonder what he says to-day—the well-meaning man?

But other factors must be considered in making up Pilate's case. Doubtless, if Pilate had consulted his personal feelings, he would have let Jesus go. But Pilate had a position to maintain. He was Roman governor, with none too secure a footing, either at Rome or in Judæa. He could hardly be expected to take chances with his official head, even to gratify his better self. He must do the politic thing. And that was all he did when he sent our Lord to Calvary. Thus, not "conscience" but *"position"* doth make cowards of us all. Sometimes I fear that "position" makes more cowards than "conscience" does. All that a man hath—truth and honor and love—will he be tempted to give, in order that he may keep his "place in the sun."

Position is one of the most expensive

things in the world. The cost of "up-keep" is sometimes tremendous. You will hear men discuss frankly the "cost" of maintenance for an automobile. Many a citizen is driving a "Ford" because he found he could not afford the cost of maintaining a higher grade car. Manufacturers and railroad men are always figuring on "cost of maintenance" for their properties. But most of us forget by the time we get to the soul. A friend of mine, now a British subject, interested me by always wearing a silk hat and a long coat to business. No matter how warm the day, or how inclement the weather, always the "top hat," as they call it, always the long-tailed coat. Days when a good American straw hat was far too heavy for my crown, still for him the dignified hat and coat. And when I ventured to ask an explanation, this is what I got: "Why, man, I have a position to maintain. I cannot afford to be mistaken for my clerk." No, I suppose he couldn't. But for *me,* the "cost of maintenance" would seem prohibitively high when the thermometer stood at ninety.

And if physical comfort were the only

thing we sacrifice to position! Some one tells of being shown through a lordly estate —such as Biltmore. Roads, trees, gardens, lakes, hedges, fountains—it was like an embodied dream of paradise. Then the visitor, with characteristic Yankee interest, inquired how much the estate might be worth. And the guide's face went serious, as he replied: "I do not know how much it is *worth,* but I know what it *cost.* It cost the owner his soul." History has few more pathetic figures than that of Wolsey, once master of England, next to the king. His was such an enviable place in the sun. He loved it so well. And he tried with infinite desperation to hold it against all comers. Like mariners in jeopardy, he was willing to throw over the cargo for the sake of the ship. Ah, but sometimes the cargo is worth more than the ship. Sometimes the ship is not worth saving apart from the cargo. And you see Wolsey at the end—broken, lights out in his soul, unbefriended, crying, piteously, "Would that I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king!" To pay everything for up-keep of position—and then to lose it!

But you? As a prophet of God, I am venturing to ask what the costs of maintenance have been for your prestige or business standing. Are there any tragedies behind the brilliant screen of your success? Any ghosts of ideals? Any wraiths of love? Sometimes the issue is clear cut between holding one's position and keeping his friend. Ask any great lover which is most worth keeping. Sometimes the cleavage lies sharp and threatening between preferment and honor. And, then, again Jesus Christ is in court. I do not ask why he came. All I ask is which way you vote. Maybe God was pleased to have Pilate governor of Judæa. Maybe Pilate was a better man for the place than any other they were likely to have. And maybe, if Pilate had done the brave thing, he would have enjoyed a longer tenure. But that is supposition. He held his position at the expense of Jesus Christ. And I do not think that any position is worth holding, or any glory worth coveting, or any love worth nourishing, after *that* sacrifice.

O, Pilate, I wonder if your solicitude with respect to your position is itself a confession?

Did you ever try to take a bone from a dog? And did you notice that an ordinary dog will growl most violently over a stolen bone? His protest is a confession. And thus I observe among humans. Blessings which deeply belong to us are seldom so precarious as those in which our right is doubtful. It is the love we do not deserve, or the honor we do not sanctify, or the power we irreverently use—these keep us anxious. Some securities may be slept on: they will be quoted at par the next morning. God is not the kind of "jealous God" we often picture him. " 'Tis God give skill." And 'tis God give honorable fortune, and place of trust, and priceless friendship. Having *given,* he expects us to *keep* against any lower claim than his. The only adequate warrant for resigning a high position is for the sake of a higher and finer. If Pilate had been sure of himself, he might safely have voted for Jesus Christ.

But my story hurries. Pilate did not get through the trial without explicit warning. Matthew says that a message came from the governor's wife: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many

things this day in a dream because of him." How like a woman! God can tell women some things more easily than he can tell men. A man usually wants an explanation. If he has a dream, he begins to ask what indigestible thing he ate the night before. Like Thomas, he declares, "Except I see the print of the nails, I will not believe." Women are wiser. They accept some messages without asking to have them repeated. A real woman will read love in your eye before you know it is there. She can sense danger before you dream it. She has a sort of intuition of the safe road. Pilate would do well to heed that cry of pain from a woman.

Especially as the warning note was one of many. If the cautionary signal had not matched others in Pilate's soul, we should never have known about it. God is forever blocking the road to evil, but, like Balaam, we do not realize that it is God intercepting. Up and down our coasts, with the approach of a heavy storm, signals are flung. We think so highly of shipping and human lives that we, as a government, have gone

into the business of warning mariners. God has always been doing that with the souls of men. If we put to sea in defiance of the signal, God is not to blame. With a solicitude we cannot fathom, and in ways too numerous to count, he hoists his warnings in our souls. Most of the moral shipwrecks are gratuitous. The storm is not to blame. Not even a West Indian hurricane, blowing up the coast of life, need affright the man who knows when to anchor. But to put out to sea against the signals in the soul invites tragedy.

This Pilate did, Pilate the well meaning. With warnings crying in his soul, he made decision against them. One need not be told what followed. Barring details, the sequence is always the same. Have you noticed that the pilot-house on a steamer is always dark at night? Even the lights from the cabins are shut off. Only the light of the stars overhead, and the lights on the sea beyond, and the tiny light shining upon the face of the compass. Poor Pilate: the first thing he did was to put out the light in the binnacle. He disregarded his soul.

And then? We need not tarry over the details of his course. Pilate did the things people commonly do, once they are committed to the wrong. He cross-examined the Prisoner, hoping perhaps to find himself in the right, after all. Then he proposed a discussion concerning truth—and you will notice that when a man wants to *argue* the nature of truth he is probably not *walking* in it. Then he tried to appeal to the better nature of the crowd; in other words, he sought to lead them to make the decision he was not willing, himself, to make. Then, in utter dismay, he gave the adverse word and sent for a basin. In other words, he did everything except the right manful thing. He declined to vote for Jesus Christ except with the crowd.

You can see him holding the basin, not very steadily perhaps. Something ails his hands—something that Lady Macbeth would have understood. There are stains that do not wash off—stains of cruelty, of suspicion, of prejudice, of injustice, as well as franker stains. For my part I would rather be stained with hot blood than with cold.

Pilate's was a stain of cold blood. He was not even angry at Jesus; he was trying to save *himself*. And we smile, through our tears perhaps, at Pilate's industry—as if the stain of a vote against Jesus Christ could be rubbed away with water.

And so, with Pilate's vote, and the basin in Pilate's hand, Jesus was led away. I do not think that Pilate ever saw Jesus again. That was his last glimpse—our Lord being led out of Pilate's court with Pilate's vote. Perhaps Pilate followed the tragedy, and sometimes wished he had the courage of Judas—to forget by a leap in the dark. I do not know. This much I do know: that to watch Jesus Christ disappear over the door-sill of your business; to see his face fade out of your home or your love; to let him go from your toil or your pain, and *by your own vote,* is a tragedy for two worlds.

XIX

THE MAN WHO WENT WITH THE CROWD

A RECENT news paragraph noted the discovery of a previously unknown satellite in the heavens. Unfortunately, I failed to charge my mind with details of the find, hence I cannot now recall whether this new moon is an eighth for Jupiter or a first for Venus. Unfortunately; for I am to talk about satellites. Besides, one hates to have his memory play him false. Some day he might forget an item more important than moons. But the satellites I want to talk about are terrestrial, not celestial; not globes, but folks. I mean the lives that revolve unceasingly and helplessly about other lives; the souls that shine by reflected light only; the men and women who, in our terse modern phrase, "have no minds of their own."

And, for want of better example, I have selected Lot. Lot was typically a satellite.

He comes into view, for the first time, trailing along after his famous uncle. As the record has it: "So Abram departed, . . . and Lot went with him." Fortunately perhaps, or we should never have heard of him, any more than the world would have been at pains to remember Boswell except as the biographer of Johnson, or Hardy save for his adoring love for Lord Nelson. Reflected light is better than darkness. At least Lot got himself remembered. But to the end of the story he kept his role of satellite. He was always depending upon some one else, letting others make his choices for him. You never see him stand out alone except in his pathetic retreat from the doomed city, whither he had gone to be with the crowd. Always a satellite!

But let me say a good word in passing. Not every one can be a great luminary. Moons are useful. We should hate to lose the silent, cold companion of earth's flight. Lovers in particular would miss the calm, celestial face which lights eyes with unearthly beauty, and turns groves into mystically illumined temples. A thousand times have

we watched the crescent grow to full-orbed glory, and followed its silver path across stream or sea. You recall that it was down the wondrously shining highway of the harvest moon that the "Harvester" saw first his "dream-girl." Perhaps the moon would have preferred to be a sun. Certain it is that some terrestrial satellites would. But who wants twenty-four hours of direct sunlight? Next to the dignity of being a great sun is to be a faithful moon. God ordained both. For, as the ancient record puts it, "God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night."

And as in heaven, so on earth. The world's business cannot get on without loyal satellites. And if God has appointed most of us to shine by reflection, we must be sure to keep our faces bright. There is no spare time for grieving because we were not given a mission like Abraham's. There is just time enough to fill Lot's role in the richest way possible. There must always be common soldiers as well as commanders. There must be followers, or of what use are leaders?

There must be disciples to practice the lessons of a master. Thank God, then, for the privilege of being a worthy satellite.

For that matter we must all be that sometimes. Man, who kindled you? Abraham Lincoln confessed that he owed everything to his "angel mother." Tall, stalwart, towering in courage and pity, once he had lain in a woman's arms. The first smile that ever irradiated that homely face was doubtless answer to the love-light in a mother's eyes. God pity the lads and lassies who had no chance to cling to a woman's knees. The best of us were satellites once. We revolved about a life which would have laid itself down for ours. And we remember, to-day, with unspeakable tenderness and reverent gratitude, those dependent days. How many would like to be children again, for a day, for the rare joy of being mothered!

And in "our sterner manhood," women still mold us. And what we are depends in no small degree upon the kind of women who do the molding. There is a type of man described scornfully as a "woman's satellite." You know the type and hate it. But Robert

Browning's life revolved about Elizabeth Barrett's. None ever accused *him* of lacking virility. He was "all man." But he drew strength and sweetness, joy and courage from a woman, as a honeybee draws honey from a flower. Dante never got far away from the face of his idolized Beatrice. What of Plutarch without his woman? Well enough to prate about woman as the "weaker vessel" and the "clinging vine." I notice, however, that men are seldom so strong that they are not weak in a woman's hands, and that, despite their bass voices and blustering ways, they do an immense amount of clinging. One great misgiving I have with respect to equal suffrage is that the new woman may lose part of her unique power of command.

So everywhere: satellites. Like Andrew, for example. It may be said that Andrew would never have been heard of apart from his relation to Peter. Very likely. Andrew was not the man to turn the world upside down. He was the man to help hold it steady against the rockings of the volcanic Peter. Perhaps you would not have loved

him as ardently as you would have loved his brother. Peter is the sort of man who always gets himself loved, in spite of his faults. But you would feel *safer* with Andrew. You could put your finger upon Andrew when you needed to do so. I like Andrew. The world needs many of him—more Andrews than Peters. He makes the ballast. He builds the caissons. He digs the wells. Call him "satellite," and yet remember that the world would be very lonely without him.

Some one tells of a cabin boy who sat outside the galley, peeling potatoes, and talking about the good voyage they were making. "And what do you do to help the ship?" asked his interviewer, in derision. "Why, I peel the potatoes," was the proud and unanswerable reply. No good voyage without the potato-peeler, or his equivalent. Always some must serve. Always some must "blush unseen." Blessed be the helpers!

And God. With respect to God, all of us, the strongest and most resourceful, are satellites only. That is, we swing round him. We borrow all our beams from the Sun of Righteousness. We glow by reflection.

Yet, as the moon helps steady the earth in her orbit, and both help hold the sun in his place, so we serve God. He cannot do without us. His august and eternal plans are laid in our hands for furtherance. Hear that bitter cry: "Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly, because they came not to the help of the Lord." Jesus trusted his task to human helpers; Peter and Thomas, and Judas, even. Always Abraham must have company. He cannot go out and up quite alone. He needs Lot.

And if Lot were the sort of company that Abraham needed, I should have compliments only to pay. But the historic Lot was different. He was a satellite who absorbed all the light, giving nothing out. He did not truly travel *with* Abraham: he hung on to his uncle's skirts. I think it was Woodrow Wilson who divided humanity into two classes—"lifters" and "leaners." Lot was a *"leaner."* He could not hold himself up—to say nothing of carrying his share of the load. He lacked spine. There are certain species of birds, notably cuckoos, which build no nests for themselves. They lay

their eggs in nests built by others. They live and replenish, thanks to the industry of worthier fellows. And, alas! there are cuckoos among the human species—males who seem never to have glimpsed the glory of being men; females who, to judge from their appearance and conversation, fulfill their mission when they wear clothes and play buzzard upon the other sex; young people whose brains have yet to be pierced with a solemn sense of obligation to the world they live in. O, the unpardonable sin of being dead weight!

During an exciting college boat race an oar snapped just as the owner's boat was forging ahead. For an instant the shell swerved perilously. Then, with a cry of good cheer to his mates, the owner of the broken oar leaped into the water. As he explained afterward, he could not afford to let his comrades pull his dead weight. If he could not do his part, he ought to give them fair chance to win the race. Lot never would have done that. He would have stayed in the boat at any cost to others. He would have jumped only to save his own life. He

was a satellite in the uncomplimentary sense of the word.

You see this as the story progresses. A day came for uncle and nephew to part. They discovered that "one house is seldom big enough for two families." Even if Abraham and Lot could continue to get on together, their servants could not. Abraham gave his nephew the choice—hill country, or plain. And Lot, the younger and the beholden, did the thoroughly characteristic thing. He chose the plain because it was easy—leaving his uncle the uplands and hardship. O, I do not blame him too severely for that. He merely took advantage of the frank generosity of his uncle. People ought not to make offers they do not wish to see accepted. I assume that Abraham was perfectly content—being a real man. And Lot did precisely what you would expect—being a satellite. He chose the *easy,* unwitting what it would cost him.

Every normal person likes a big easy chair—one of the sort that seems to come up to meet you with luxurious seduction. A sitting room lacking such comforts looks

cheerless. And nobody else on earth enjoys a great chair more thoroughly than the author enjoys it. But anatomists are saying that one may spend too much time in an easy chair—that the human back needs native bracing more than it needs cushions. Body relaxation, over indulged, weakens the nerves, softens the muscles, and by so much unmakes the physical man. Hence it is not quixotism which prompts some people to choose a straight-backed chair. All of which is a parable. We cannot afford to let life be made too easy. A "soft snap" tends to make the soul of a man soft.

You can spoil a hunting dog by permitting him to lie all day, and every day, on a warm rug before the fire. And you can spoil a boy or a girl in the same fashion. At all cost of present luxury, we must keep life heroic. We must decline those abatements that weaken and emasculate the soul.

Not many years ago William James said solemnly that if war should be abolished, we must find some substitute for the development of those heroic qualities which war always brings into play. I wonder if the

plague of fire and steel now devastating a continent means that God could see no less expensive way of saving to Europe its manhood and womanhood. At any rate, this is what appears: whole nations forgetting their pleasures for the sake of their souls. History is savagely blunt on this score. It shows the tragedy of ease. It declares that the only enemy which can destroy a people is the silent, insidious, smiling enemy within their own bones. I am not pleading for hair shirts, or for any sort of gratuitous self-denial—merely for the courage to say "No" to the luxury that unfits the soul. Lot, fleeing from Sodom, is the divine logic of choosing the easy in life.

But of that a moment later. Meanwhile, I want you to notice how Lot happened to be in Sodom. Frankly, I do not know just how he *got* there. He would probably have told you that he had not the faintest intention of taking up residence in that dissolute city of the plain. He merely liked the neighborhood of it—as so many people enjoy the neighborhood of sin. So, when he chose the easy country, "he pitched his tent toward

Sodom." That was all; he merely "pitched his tent" that way. He was a good man, in the main, even if a satellite. He would have said that he hated wrong. But he "pitched his tent toward Sodom."

And if anything were needed to complete the tragedy, you have it here. The moral shipwrecks of the world would be less pitiful if men deliberately drove their craft upon the rocks. Few are guilty of such stupidity. They merely neglect all soundings, or sail in the fog. And the crash startles them as much as it startles the world. I firmly believe that most people mean well. Inducements being equal, superficially, they would choose the good. It is not easy to forget a mother's prayers and reproaching eyes. It is not easy to swallow the lump of moral protest in one's throat. It is not easy to beat conscience into insensibility. Some of us have never confessed the way the "apples of Sodom" tasted at first. Still, like Lot, we pitch our tent toward the wrong city.

I do not ask you to open your heart for *me:* all I ask is that you open it wide for your own inspection. Perhaps you came

from the country, years ago. *This* is not Sodom; this is the plain-country you chose because life here seemed more advantaged. But which way did you pitch your tent? Or, you were born here. You never lived anywhere else. Then, without my saying so, you *know* this is not Sodom. Souls as rare as any that bless the world live here, as neighbors. And still I ask, Which way did you pitch your tent—toward Sodom or the other way? In a neighboring garage, is a beautiful leopard—if so treacherous a beast may ever be called beautiful. Wonderful eyes, coat like velvet, paws soft as felt. But claws. The leopard changes neither spots nor disposition. Watch him at play with a ball, and you may think of him as a great kitten. But keep your face away from the cage. The heroine in one of Locke's stories bore to her grave the terrible marks of a "pet" like that. Sin is a leopard. It never can be tamed. Though it wear the livery of heaven, it has claws—as some of you know. For God's sake keep your face away from the cage. At your peril you pitch your tent toward Sodom.

There is not time for me to romance about Lot's residence in the city. Things went well for a time—they usually do. Then, suddenly, they went desperately wrong. And you see the man who went *with* the crowd, fleeing, like one mad, *from* the crowd. Who talked about "social sins"—the sin of the wineglass, of the card table, of licentiousness? There are no "social sins." Sin is *anti*-social. In the issue, it leaves the transgressor alone with the most complete and unconquerable loneliness in the world.

Yes, I know Lot was saved, "so as by fire." God has wonderful ways of redeeming us from the consequences of pitching toward Sodom. Nobody has yet guessed the patience and resourcefulness of God. But what a pity to tax him to bring us forth with a salvation "so as by fire"!

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